

Cyprus Foreign Minister Kyprianou to visit Australia

Cyprus Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou will pay a visit to Australia on 3-13 March 2009, during which he will meet, inter alia, with his Australian counterpart Steven Smith.

In statements to the Press here today after a meeting he held with a USA Congress delegation comprising Senior Officers, Kyprianou said that at the meeting with the Australian Foreign Minister he would have the opportunity to discuss a number of common interest issues. He also noted that he would hold meetings with the Greek community in Australia.

As regards the meeting, Kyprianou stressed their role in shaping the US politicians' decisions and positions.

Additionally, he underlined the importance of such

meetings, during which the USA officials were briefed on the Cyprus problem.

"There are a number of US Congress resolutions that support the Cyprus' efforts", he said adding that the American officials will also have the opportunity to meet and discuss issues that concern Cyprus, with Government's officials, politicians and members of the Parliament.

Replying to a question on the Cyprus flagged ship Monchegorsk, Kyprianou pointed out that for the Foreign Ministry the issue is closed.

"After the cargo of the ship, which was considered to breach of UN resolutions, was unloaded and stored, the Foreign Ministry's role is over", he said.

It has been alleged that the Cypriot-flagged ship,

which originated from Iran, was carrying arms and it was forced by a US military vessel to anchor near Limassol port to have its cargo inspected, in order to establish whether there has been a breach of UN Security Council sanctions, as claimed.

On February 3, the government submitted a report on the findings of the inspections to the competent UN Security Council Sanctions Committee. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on that day that a team of experts from the Republic of Cyprus proceeded with two inspections of the cargo of ship "Monchegorsk" on January 29 and February 2.

The Cyprus government decided on February 13 to unload and store the cargo of the ship.



Dionysia Festival in Athens

Dionysia 2009 – the Athens Wine Festival - Greece's most important and exciting wine event of the year will be held from February 20 to 22 at Zappeion Megaron Hall, where over 150 winemakers from all over Greece will present over 1,500 wines to the public.

The festival is a unique opportunity to taste the new generation of fine Greek wines. Visitors can meet the vintners themselves and learn how they produce agiorgitico, xinomavro, assyrtico and moschofilero, some of Greece's native grape varieties. The event is organized under the aegis of the National Interprofessional Association of the Vine and Wines, with the support of the City of Athens and the Athens Tourism & Economic Development Company.

Thailand frees Australian writer

Harry Nicolaides, an Australian writer jailed in Thailand for defaming its monarch, has returned home after being pardoned by the king and set free.

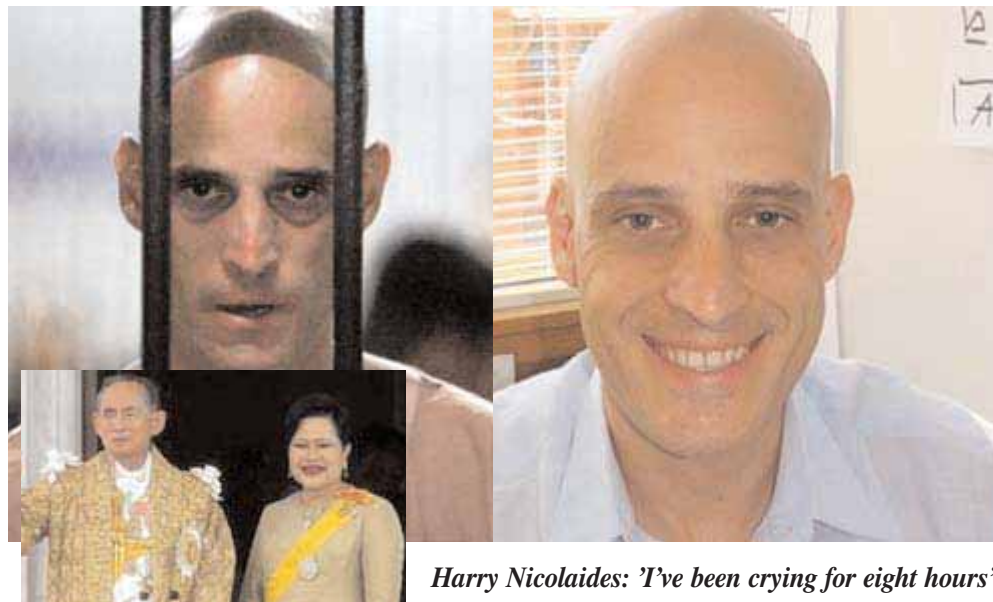
Mr Nicolaides, 41, had been sentenced to three years imprisonment in January.

The charges arose from a passage in a largely unknown novel he wrote in 2005, of which only seven of 50 copies printed were ever sold.

Mr Nicolaides was met by his family in Melbourne. He would next see his mother in hospital, his father told reporters.

Speaking at the airport in Melbourne, Mr Nicolaides thanked the Australian people for their support, the Associated Press news agency reports.

He told reporters he had been crying



Harry Nicolaides: 'I've been crying for eight hours'

for eight hours, having only learnt moments before his flight that his mother had suffered a stroke while he was imprisoned.

"A few hours before that I was informed I had a royal pardon... A few hours before that I was climbing out of a sewerage tank that I fell into in the prison," AP quotes him as saying.

'Dishonour'

The Australian government had lobbied Thailand's royal family for his release.

Before he was jailed in January, the Bangkok court said a passage about an unnamed crown prince in the author's self-published fictional book, *Verisimilitude*, had caused "dishonour" to the Thai royal family.

The case had become a real cause celebre in Australia, says the BBC's Nick Bryant in Sydney, with Mr Nicolaides's imprisonment violating a basic Australian sense of fair play.

Images on television of him wearing prison clothes and in chains shocked many Australian viewers, our correspondent says.

According to Mr Nicolaides's lawyer, Mark Dean, the writer's release was the result of close co-operation between the Thai and Australian governments, our correspondent adds.

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy but has severe lese majeste laws.

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesman Thani Thongpakdee told AP: "This is not the first time that a foreigner has been granted a royal pardon. It is within his majesty's power to do so."

The greatest Greek?

Is it possible to determine the "greatest Greek" of all time? Lord knows we have more than a few names to choose from - Plato, Alexander the Great, Hippocrates...the list goes on and on.

Undaunted by the task, SKAI TV recently debuted a new series called "Great Greeks" to remind us all of the personalities that have lived throughout history as well as contemporaries that have made their mark on mankind (or at least Greekind).

The project is quite involved with people voting/SMS-ing for the top 100 followed by short and full length presentations, and finally, a live televised debate on May 18th of the top 10 candidates.

