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Hellenic News, Culture & Lifestyle

CYPRUS ELECTION



Anastasiades and Malas go to run-off

Conservative Nicos Anastasiades and leftist Stavros Malas will contest a runoff for the Presidency in Cyprus on February 24, after the first round of Sunday proved inconclusive.

Although exit polls had shown Anastasiades securing over half of the votes cast, prompting early celebrations at his camp, the final results revealed a stronger-than-expected showing for independent candidate Yorgos Lillikas who came within 2 percent of entering the runoff.

With 100 percent of the votes counted, Anastasiades, the head of conservative DISY, got 45.46 percent. Leftist AKEL's candidate Malas advanced to the second

round collecting 26.91 percent, edging out Lillikas, supported by the Social Democrats of EDEK, with 24.93 percent.

Opinion polls before the first round had posed the question of an Anastasiades-vs-Malas runoff and found the right-wing candidate likely to win by a large margin.

Preliminary official data on turnout, announced by the head of the electoral commission in Nicosia, showed 82.84 percent of registered voters cast their ballot in Cyprus and abroad, down from just under 90 percent in the previous presidential election in 2008.

"As of tomorrow, I am taking the initiative of a joint campaign for all political

forces who believe in change. We will expand the popular mandate even further so as to rid ourselves of a policy that has led us to lining for food," stated Anastasiades.

"I want to express the desire to find Yorgos Lillikas on our side in a common struggle to stop Anastasiades from getting into power," said AKEL General Secretary Andros Kyprianou.

"We lost a tough battle. This was only the beginning, our course has only just begun," said Lillikas, who has been twice voted a parliamentary deputy on the AKEL ticket.

Desperate landlords seeking way out

Tens of thousands of private property owners are hostage to the combination of an unprecedented wave of taxes and the decline of market prices to levels below those used for tax purposes, known as objective values. Real estate market professionals argue that the people who opted for investing in property in previous decades in order to utilize it and not resell made the worst possible choice, as besides the tax burden, which has grown from the extraordinary levy paid through the electricity bills, many properties are currently without a tenant.

It is estimated that some 30 percent of commercial properties are empty today – with the rate set to grow – and that rental rates have declined by 40 to 50 percent since early 2009. Meanwhile, most rented properties show significant delays in the payment of rent. A recent analysis by Alpha Bank showed that an investor with a property worth 2 million euros will this year have to pay taxes of about 47,000 euros, not including the income tax from rent revenues.

"There are hundreds of cases of owners who have tried in the last year to sell one or two of their stores or offices even below their objective value, but without being able to find a buyer," notes a property management company official.

The only solution landlords appear to have is to ask tax



authorities to accelerate the process of confirmation of their debt so that their properties are confiscated and put to auction, after which the state can keep the amount for taxes due and the owner can pocket the difference.



Newly appointed Greek ambassador to Mexico dies

Dimitris Anninos, Greece's newly appointed Ambassador to Mexico died of an aneurysm at a Mexico City hospital on Friday, a day after he had presented his credentials to President Enrique Peña Nieto, it was reported on Saturday. During his career Anninos served as Greek General Consul in Melbourne and Shanghai, as well as Greece's Ambassador to New Zealand. Foreign Affairs Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos expressed his condolences to the envoy's family

One arrested in Villa Callas clash

A man was arrested late on Friday after riot police clashed with a group of 200 self-styled anarchists attempting to break into Villa Callas, also known as Villa Scaramanga, a former family residence of the late opera diva, located on Patisson Street in central Athens. The building, which had been used as a squat, was recently cleared by police.

Teenager arrested for rape in Serres

A 16-year-old boy was being questioned by authorities over the weekend for the alleged rape of a 15-year-old girl. According to reports the incident occurred in Serres, northeastern Greece, on Friday, and the 16-year-old was expected to face a local prosecutor on Monday.

Dozens linked to terrorist group

More than 50 people are believed to have been active members of Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire when the urban guerrilla group scaled up its action against political and business targets between 2009 and 2011. At least 50 people have been seen visiting an apartment in the central Athens neighborhood of Exarchia that has been linked to suspected members of the group, police sources said.

Many of these people remain at large, according to police, who said investigators were still seeking to determine the size of the group's Thessaloniki cell. Last October, four people were convicted for membership of the group.