

Census figures show 11.5% rise

The preliminary results of the sixth post-independence census conducted in October-November show that the population of the Government-controlled area of Cyprus is some 686,000, an increase of 11.5 per cent over the total shown in the fifth census held in 1992.

Almost 40 per cent of the total population, 273,000 people, live in Nicosia, which represents an increase of 9.6 per cent since 1992. The second largest city is Limassol, with 197,000 inhabitants, followed by Larnaca with 114,000, while the Famugusta area also has 114,000 people. The biggest percentage rise was recorded for the coastal resort of Paphos, which now has a population of 65,000, over 20 per cent up on the 1992 figure. □

Mandate renewed

The Cyprus Government welcomed the UN Security Council's six-month renewal of the mandate of the UN Peace-Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) on 14 December, particularly its reaffirmation of previous resolutions calling for a federal solution to the Cyprus problem.

Adopted unanimously, Resolution 1384 extended the UNFICYP mandate until 15 June, 2002, and urged the Turkish Cypriot side to rescind the restrictions imposed on the Force's operations in June 2000 and to restore the military *status quo ante* at Stovilia. It also called on the parties to address the humanitarian issue of missing persons "with due urgency and seriousness".

The Security Council welcomed the latest report on UN operations in Cyprus submitted by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who recorded that as of November 2001 UNFICYP consisted of 1,227 troops, 35 civilian police and 139 civilian staff. The budgeted cost of the Force in 12 months to end-June 2002 is \$40,697,145 net, of which a third (\$13,565,715) is being covered by a voluntary contribution from the Cyprus Government and a further \$6.5 million by one from Greece.

● Mr Annan on 12 December announced the appointment of Major General Jin Ha Hwang of South Korea as the new commander of UNFICYP in succession to Major General Victory Rana. □

Loizidou action postponed again

Action to force Turkey to implement the 1997 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upholding the suit of dispossessed Kyrenia refugee Titiina Loizidou was again postponed by the Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europe in early December.

The further deferral deepened frustration in Nicosia at the non-implementation of the ruling and of a follow-up award of some \$900,000 in compensation and costs to Ms Loizidou. According to informed sources cited by the press, the Ministerial Committee took the view that the more hopeful diplomatic situation as regards a Cyprus settlement would not be assisted by the Council of Europe insisting at this stage that Turkey should honour its membership obligations. □

Independents do well in local polls

Local elections held on 16 December produced a significant rise in voting support for independent candidates at the expense of the established political parties. At the same time, the conservative Democratic Rally (DISY) polled strongly in many municipalities and a three-party alliance of the left-wing AKEL, the Democratic Party (DIKO) and the Movement of Social Democrats (KISOS) also made an impact.

The elections were for some 30 mayors and municipal councils for towns in the Government-controlled area and in occupied northern Cyprus, as well as for heads of communities and community councils in around 250 villages. Voters originating from the occupied area had two votes, one for the authority where they currently resided and a second for their original authority. As in presidential and parliamentary elections, voting was compulsory for all registered electors.

The victor in the contest for the flagship mayorship of Nicosia, the capital, was Michalakis Zampelas, an accountant who ran as an independent with the support of DISY.

He received 50.1 per cent of the vote, against 48.6 per cent for Kypros Chrysostomides, who was backed by the AKEL-DIKO-KISOS alliance. Elected for a five-year term in succession to Lellos Demtriades, who retired after serving in the mayoral post for 30 years in the post, Mr Zampelas described his success as "a victory for all Nicosians", adding that "the divided capital's problems have no party colour".

DISY leaders claimed that the overall local results showed that the party had regained its position as the strongest formation in Cyprus, with 38 per cent of the vote compared with 34 per cent in the May general elections.



• Independent election victor... The new Mayor of Nicosia, Michalakis Zampelas.

However, this claim was disputed by AKEL, which insisted that it remained the strongest party and that the AKEL-DIKO-KISOS alliance had won two-thirds of the mayoral contests with an aggregate vote of "well over 50 per cent".

Within the alliance, both DIKO and KISOS appeared to reverse their decline in recent elections, claiming to have won 18 per cent and 8 per cent of the vote respectively. The outcome was therefore seen by commentators as strengthening the prospects of a joint AKEL-DIKO-KISOS candidate being presented in the presidential elections due in 2003. □

British bases to remain outside EU

The British Government confirmed on 5 December that the two UK sovereign base areas (SBAs) at Dhekelia and Akrotiri would remain outside the European Union (EU) when Cyprus became a member. Britain had retained full sovereignty over the two bases when Cyprus achieved independence in 1960, but they had not become part of the EU when Britain joined in 1973.

Answering a question in the House of Lords, Trade Minister Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean said: "Following careful consideration of the political and technical aspects of this issue, the Government have concluded that the case for leaving the SBAs outside the EU remains valid. We will be

taking forward discussions with the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Commission on that basis. Our policy will require some technical adjustments to ensure the continued smooth functioning of the relationship between the SBAs and Cyprus."

Baroness Symons added: "We will need in particular to work out the best way to make sure that Cypriots who live and work in the SBAs do not benefit less from Cyprus' membership of the EU than their compatriots in the Republic. And we need to ensure that the arrangements are compatible with the 1960 Treaty of Establishment. We will continue to keep Parliament informed of developments." □

Gas supply options under review

Commerce and Industry Minister Nicos Rolandis on 20 December announced that a group of experts would be appointed in January to advise the Government on how to import Egyptian natural gas via Syria. He made it clear that the Government's preferred option was an undersea pipeline, for both environmental and economic reasons. However, the option of importing liquefied gas by ship would also be investigated.

On the basis of the recommendations of the group of experts, the final decision on the importation options would be made by the Government at the end of April. It was hoped that a negotiated supply agreement would be concluded with Egypt and Syria by June or

July. One potential advantage of the pipeline option was that Cyprus would be able to import additional gas for liquefaction on the island and onward exportation to southern European markets.

Mr Rolandis said that, whichever option was chosen, the first gas supplies from Syria were not expected to arrive before 2006. For this reason, the third electricity generation unit at the Vassiliko power station would run on crude oil when it became operational in 2004. The Minister explained that the fourth, fifth and sixth power units at Vassiliko would be constructed to operate on natural gas and that the older plants would be replaced by gas-burning units in due course. □