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Expats back in business

By ANNE CANALP

EXPAT entertainers will be back in business by the end of the month after a turbulent year, thanks to a local businessman.

Dave Griffiths has founded a new company, Elite Entertainment, to manage work permits that will allow performers to appear without fear of breaching employment law.

Permit fears came to a head in September when two restaurants were fined 8,000TL each and a charity fundraiser was called off as officials mounted a fresh crackdown on "illegal" expat entertainers.

Artistes were left dangling after one was sacked and another resigned from the All Stars Agency Promotions (ASAP) after complaints of favouritism, over-charging and lack of bookings sparked rows between performers and agency manager Ken Hibbitt.

Ahmet Aşık founded the agency in 2012 but announced its closure after a feud between ASAP entertainers Andrew "Sings" Tait and Glen King and expat singer Lee Hickens led to a fight at Harry's Bar in Alsancak.

Mr Tait and Mr King left the island for the UK shortly afterwards.

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Mr Aşık said: "I am keeping the agency open until the end of November to give everyone time to make alternative arrangements. I am gutted that it didn't work out but I wish Elite all the best and good luck."

"No matter how much I tried to compromise with the government on off-season payments I could get now-here, so we were basically losing money to stay legal."

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Musician Gavin Simons said: "I am so grateful that Elite Entertainment has given us the opportunity to work within TRNC employment regulations. Everything is now very clear, simple and concise and I am looking forward to getting back on to the circuit again."

Barry "Snakes" Steward added: "Concerns about per-

forming in North Cyprus without the appropriate permit and for the venues facing possible huge fines for employing illegal acts have now been addressed."

He said that a long process of negotiation with the authorities had achieved multiple-venue permits for himself and Mr Simons, the first two performers to sign

up. Mr Simons added: "We will be speaking to other artists about coming on board and possibly organise a get-together to explain how it will work."

"It is not an agency, rather a mechanism for legality. We want to avoid the mistakes of the past, such as lack of transparency and favouritism, and aim to become one big happy family of artists who pay their dues on time."

