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Rachel Vella

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pgs. 12-13

PN support in Gozo in free-fall

JAMES DEBONO

THE PN has lost 10.2 per cent to the opposition parties in Gozo, with both Labour and Alternattiva gaining 5.1 per cent from the PN's pool of votes in the 2003 election.

On the other hand the MLP only loses 1.8 per cent of its 2003 vote pool to the PN.

This emerges from MaltaToday's latest survey, in which 300 Gozitan respondents randomly chosen from the directory were asked how they would vote in a forthcoming election and how they had voted back in 2003.

The survey shows the MLP trailing the PN by just five per cent in this traditionally PN

leaning region – a much narrower margin than the 18 per cent margin separating the two parties in the 2003 general elections.

The survey also shows that Josie Muscat's new party Azzjoni Nazzjonali has not left a mark on the Gozitan electorate. Despite

the PN's losses, Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono is still trusted by 53 per cent of Gozitans.

The survey reveals the extent of popular outrage against MEPA's recent decision to allow 23 villas overlooking the popular Ramla l-Hamra bay, with nearly two thirds of respondents disagreeing with MEPA's decision to grant this controversial permit.

Even a majority of Nationalist voters reject this decision.

A majority of Gozitan respondents also declared themselves against the proposed development at Hondoq ir-Rummien and at Ta' Cenc.

This surge in environmental awareness in Gozo is reflected in greater support for Alternattiva Demokratika which scores

nearly four per cent in this traditionally conservative locality.

The survey also shows that Gozo still cherishes traditional Catholic values by rejecting divorce and same sex marriages.

While nearly half Maltese respondents had expressed themselves for the introduction of divorce in February, only 25 per cent of Gozitans agree.

The survey also shows that patronage networks are still very strong in Gozo.

While only 2.7 per cent of Maltese citizens admitted receiving favours for their vote in a previous MaltaToday survey, 12 per cent of Gozitan respondents openly admitted receiving favours in exchange of their vote.

Full survey report on pages 10-11

Gozo electoral barometer	
PN	25.7
MLP	20.7
AD	3.7
Don't know	19
Would not vote	13.3
No reply	17.7



MMA official bluffed with junior to corrupt him – page 7

Producers accuse PBS of auctioning TV schedule – page 8

Bortex fires Maltese, hires Chinese

JAMES DEBONO

THREE months after 113 workers lost their jobs at Bortex, a Chinese company employing Chinese workers intends to move into one of the factory where Maltese workers used to earn a living.

News that the Chinese-owned Leisure Clothing Company – a company employing a sizeable



Bortex Plant: Closes for Maltese, opens for Chinese

contingent of Chinese workers, whose accommodation and food costs are deducted from their wage bill – intends to relocate its operations from Corradino to Bulebel, in a factory previously used by Bortex, was confirmed by GWU official Roberto Cristiano.

Angry former Bortex employees who contacted MaltaToday expressed dismay that the same plant in which they used to work will now host poorly-paid Chinese employees, subcontracted by the same company that fired them.

But MaltaToday is informed that the Chinese company had been subcontracted by Bortex before the company's closure.

GWU official Roberto Cristiano confirmed that the Chinese company has applied to relocate its plant to Bulebel. **▶ page 8**

Forget the bedpans, let's talk travel plans...

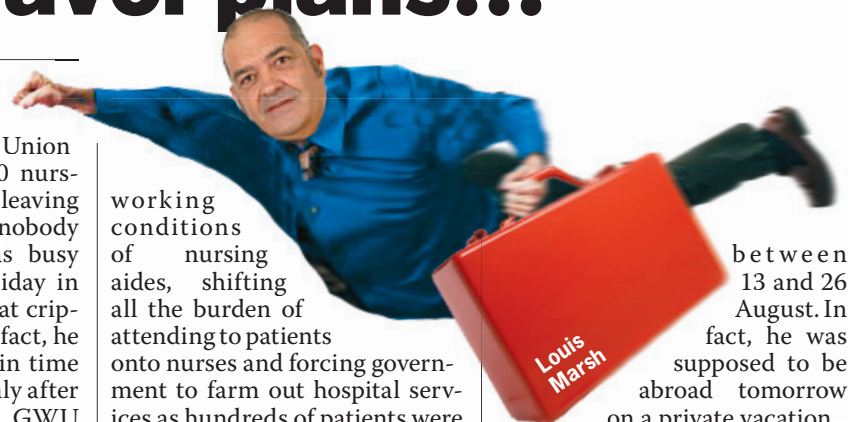
BIANCA CARUANA

THE General Workers' Union official who ordered 900 nursing aides to go on strike, leaving bed-ridden patients with nobody to look after them, was busy planning his private holiday in the midst of the crisis that crippled Malta's hospitals. In fact, he called off the strike just in time to pack his bags. It was only after MaltaToday sought the GWU secretary general's comments about his secretary's holiday, and after the strike was reactivated late on Friday evening, that Louis Marsh chose to cancel his travel plans.

Section Secretary Louis Marsh suspended industrial action after six days of confrontation with the health ministry over the

working conditions of nursing aides, shifting all the burden of attending to patients onto nurses and forcing government to farm out hospital services as hundreds of patients were left in their beds in the stifling heat. The suspension did not last long as the same directives are back in force since Friday.

But MaltaToday confirmed that Marsh had his holiday in mind when calling off the industrial action, insisting with the health division that he could not hold meetings with authorities



between 13 and 26 August. In fact, he was supposed to be abroad tomorrow on a private vacation.

By calling off the union's directives, Marsh finally obtained a meeting with the health division on Friday, in line with the precondition set by the government since the beginning of industrial actions.

"He knew about this condition from day one and the ministry hasn't **▶ page 8**

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THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

SUNDAY, 6 AUGUST 2007

AFM aircraft crashes in Dwejra

An Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) Bulldog crash-landed near Dwejra in Gozo at about 7.30 pm. The two crew members suffered slight injuries and were airlifted by an AFM Alouette helicopter to St Luke's Hospital to be treated for shock. The single-engined Bulldog TMk1, tail number AS0020 which was on a coastal patrol, was extensively damaged, the army said. The crew members were Warrant Officer 2 Mark Brincat who was piloting the Bulldog and Lance Bombardier Kevin Borg who was the flight technician.

MONDAY, 6 AUGUST 2007

St Luke's Hospital to be developed

The government intends to develop the area in Guardamangia currently occupied by St Luke's Hospital once all patients leave the site, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said at a press conference during his visit to Australia. Gonzi would not specify the nature of the development, saying only that he hoped an announcement would be made soon "in line with the government's vision for 2015". The government disagreed, he said, with the Labour Party's proposal to turn St Luke's into a home for senior citizens, and would instead be seeking to extend existing facilities to cope with that demand. The site would only be developed once that process is complete.

TUESDAY, 7 AUGUST 2007

"Tista' Tkun Int" pulls out of PBS

The producers of Tista' Tkun Int have decided to pull the popular programme off the TVM schedule after seven years. The decision comes just a day after the Broadcasting Authority released its latest audience survey confirming that Tista' Tkun Int is the most viewed programme among all stations, registering its record audience share peak on Thursday nights with 24.24 per cent between April and June. Rachel Vella, executive producer of Tista' Tkun Int, said the production company's board decided to call it a day after weeks of "prolonged negotiations" with PBS, which demanded that Tista' Tkun Int pay double last year's amount for the same time slot on Thursdays and Sundays.

WEDNESDAY, 8 AUGUST 2007

Second terror threat to BHC

The British High Commission (BHC) received a second terror threat in just 17 days. Sources said the threat came in the form of a letter on Monday addressed to British High Commissioner Nick Archer. It read: "We will shoot every member of the High Commission. Iraq is our country, go home." The letter also contained some words in Arabic to the same effect, the sources added. Police sources said security has been increased both at the High Commission at the WhiteHall Mansions in Ta' Xbiex as well as with the High Commissioner. It appears that no other British High Commission or embassy has received similar threats recently.

THURSDAY, 9 AUGUST 2007

Sant's first visit to Mater Dei

Speaking during his first visit to Mater Dei hospital, Opposition leader Alfred Sant warned that the problems in the health sector would only be multiplied if the management systems adopted at St Luke's Hospital were transferred to Mater Dei. He said the new hospital was going to put a massive burden on public finances and it was crucial for Mater Dei to wield new and updated managerial and administrative systems.

Sant steered away from controversy, thanked Health Minister Louis Deguara and the hospital authorities for the invitation and said: "It's an enormous place, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment... and it's well finished."

FRIDAY, 10 AUGUST 2007

Man dies at Ramla l-Hamra

A 49-year-old Gozitan from Ghajnsielem died when trying to assist seven children who found themselves in difficulty while swimming at Ramla l-Hamra. The police said yesterday they were informed just before 7 pm. that the man could not swim back after he went out to help the children. Members of the Civil Protection Department gave the man first aid but he died by the time an ambulance arrived. Duty magistrate Paul Coppini appointed experts to help in an inquiry.

SATURDAY, 11 AUGUST 2007

15 immigrants lost at sea

Fifteen asylum seekers are lost at sea after the boat they were travelling on capsized 60 nautical miles off the coast of Malta. There were 28 people on board the capsized vessel. Thirteen were saved yesterday by the

Spanish cruise liner Jules Verne which was on its way to Malta. Meanwhile, the same cruise liner had earlier met another boat laden with around 250 migrants in a location some 80 nautical miles to the south of Malta and travelling northwards towards Italy.

Birkirkara man charged with rape

A 23-year-old Birkirkara man was arraigned under arrest in

Court in the afternoon and charged with the rape of a 17-year-old girl the previous night at Gianpula Road, limits of Rabat. The man, Josef Cuschieri, pleaded not guilty to the charges presented against him in Court. The Magistrates Court, presided over by Magistrate Anthony Vella, did not grant him bail to the accused and he was remanded in custody. Police Inspector Nezren Grixti prosecuted.

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As part of our ongoing programme to enhance the transmission quality of GO Plus digital TV service, as of 10th August, the company will be upgrading its digital television broadcasting network. This will result in an overall improvement of the reception coverage and the quality of the service.

For this purpose, in addition to the current transmitter at Portomaso Tower, GO Plus will be installing another digital TV main transmitter site at the GO station in Naxxar (opposite the Trade Fair grounds). The new transmitter site may however introduce certain reception problems in a number of areas of Malta. Customers will be notified by post on what should be done to rectify such occurrences. Alternatively, one can visit www.go.com.mt and click on GO Plus to follow the instructions.

GO Plus apologizes for any inconveniences caused.

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Mr Gerald Fenech has had his employment terminated with MediaToday and is not authorised to act on its behalf.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs invites quotations for the renting of office space of at least 600square meters, possibly in, or close to Valletta.

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Director Corporate Services
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by not later than the 31st of August 2007 indicating the space available and the cost of the rent together with other relevant conditions.

'Our pharmacy licences are now safe and more valuable than ever'

KARL SCHEMBRI

PHARMACY owners have been gloating over the effective ban on new pharmacy licences in the wake of the Pharmacy of Your Choice agreement signed with the Prime Minister two weeks ago: a fact which confirms – if any confirmation were needed – that the pharmacies' market is a closed shop.

"Our licences are now safe (and more valuable than ever) as the old legal notices liberalising the quotas of pharmacies per population have been repealed," wrote the pharmacy owners' representative and GRTU president, Mario Debono, in an email to his members, in which he attached a copy of the agreement.

The message, which infuriated applicants for new pharmacy licences, assumes added significance in view of around 300 pending applications for new pharmacies to open around the islands, despite government promises to liberalise the market.



Mario Debono

In fact, according to the agreement there can only be one pharmacy for every 2,500 people in any locality, which means that only another 25

new pharmacies can open in Malta and Gozo.

For the first four months, the scheme will be introduced as a pilot project in Mosta to en-

able the authorities to identify logistical problems and to set the service levels that will be required from the pharmacies that will join the scheme.

A call for applications will then be issued for pharmacies to join the scheme. If in a particular locality there are no pharmacies willing to join the POYC scheme, then the Government will have the right to issue a licence for a new pharmacy in that locality subject to that pharmacy joining that scheme.

According to official population estimates, a new pharmacy can be opened in the following localities: Siggiewi, Fgura, Vittoriosa, Kalkara, Kercem, Zebbug Gozo, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Qala, Safi, San Gwann, Sannat, Xaghra, and Xewkija; while two

pharmacies can be opened in Mdina, Zabbar, Fontana, Ghasri, and San Lawrenz Gozo.

Pharmacy licence applicants, however, said that most of the localities where they could open their outlets would not be feasible, either because they are remote or because they are already well-served.

Incidentally, Debono, who signed the agreement on behalf of the GRTU members, has been under police investigation and the subject of a magisterial inquiry since December, after the authorities were alerted to a suspicious consignment of 400 packets of fake medicinals imported by his company.

Debono – who is also a shareholder in three pharmacies – insisted he had nothing to do with the importation of the drugs confiscated from his warehouse, as his company was only acting as a break bulk operation to re-export the drug out of Europe.

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www.maltatoday.com.mt/2007/07/29/t4.html

AFM calls off search for missing migrants

CHARLOT ZAHRA

THE Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) have stopped searching for the boat with 27 migrants on board which capsized on Friday 60 nautical miles to the south of Malta, Brigadier Carm Vassallo told MaltaToday.

"We searched for the missing migrants on Friday but yesterday we deployed our vessels on other assignments," he said when asked whether the search for the missing migrants had continued yesterday.

Thirteen were rescued by Spanish cruise liner Jules Verne which was on its way to Malta, while a woman was airlifted to St Luke's Hospital after suffering from hypothermia.

Around 10 migrants were still missing at sea yesterday and are now feared dead.

Meanwhile, the migrant boat carrying over 200 per-

sons, which was spotted by the AFM on Friday on its way to Italy, reached Lampedusa yesterday night at a speed of about 5 knots.

The immigrants found Italian coastguard vessels waiting for them upon reaching Italian waters to escort them towards the Italian island.

Their immigrants were reported to be in good medical condition and told the AFM they required no assistance. Italian news agencies have reported that the migrants are of Eritrean nationality and that there were also women and children on board the vessel.

In spite of the bad weather conditions in the area, with wind speeds up to 52 knots and Force 4 seas, the boat, which is actually a 20-metre fishing boat, has managed to steam ahead with no difficulties.

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Musicians give hope to immigrants

TEODOR RELJIC

ITALIAN singer Claudio Baglioni will be performing in Malta on August 25 as part of the proactive artist's efforts to promote solidarity with irregular immigrants crossing the Mediterranean. Baglioni will be joined on stage by co-nationals Gianni Morandi and Riccardo Cocciante.

The event arrives in light of Akon's visit to the Marsa Open Center following his performance at Isle of MTV. The visit has proved to have "extremely posi-

tive" effects, according to Terry Gosden of the Open Center.

"Events like these give the immigrants some hope. In this case it was amplified by the fact that Akon is of Senegalese origin. Seeing somebody from the same region as you make it big has a positive effect on the immigrants.

"Not only is it a morale boost for the immigrants but it also a good opportunity for the public to warm up to them. People feel less alienated from them when they realise that the immigrants have common aspirations and interests to them," Gosden said.

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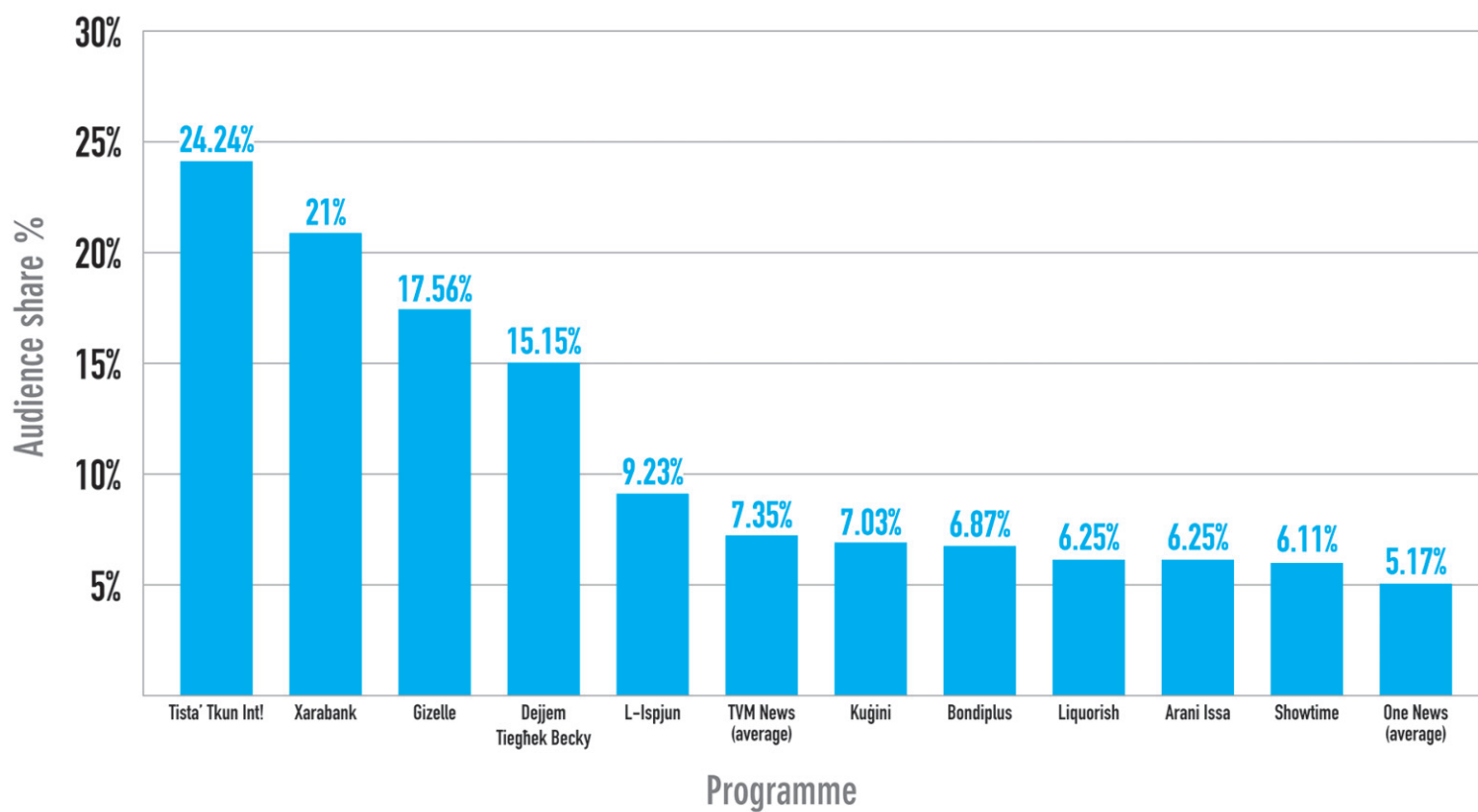
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BROADCASTING AUTHORITY SURVEY

APRIL - JUNE 2007

Programme	Audience share %
Tista' Tkun Int!	24.24
Xarabank	21
Gizelle	17.56
Dejjem Tieghek Becky	15.15
L-Ispjun	9.23
TVM News (average)	7.35
Kugini	7.03
Bondiplus	6.87
Liquorish	6.25
Arani Issa	6.25
Showtime	6.11
One News (average)	5.17



The Broadcasting Authority Survey was conducted using data collected by means of telephone interviews carried out by the National Statistics Office during the period 1 April to 30 June 2007. A full copy of the survey can be downloaded from the Broadcasting Authority's website at www.ba-malta.org