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Richard Muscat kept son's alleged sexual assaults under wraps for 10 months

Michael Frendo: 'I was only informed yesterday'

KARL SCHEMBRI

MALTA'S ambassador to Ireland, Richard Muscat, submitted his resignation on Friday after the Irish press named his 35-year-old son, Massimo, who is accused of an alleged sexual assault on two women in Dublin 10 months ago.

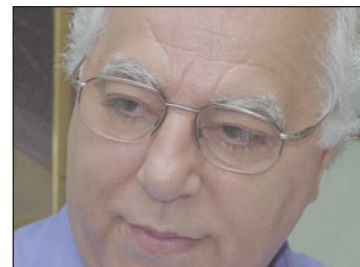
MaltaToday can reveal that Muscat kept news of his son's arrest and police interrogation

Christina Leech-Cleary: The victim who claimed sexual assault by Muscat's son

last October a closely guarded secret, not even informing Foreign Minister Michael Frendo when he came to be reappointed ambassador earlier this month.

"Richard only informed me yesterday (Friday) about this case, as his name surfaced in the Irish press," the minister said when contacted yesterday evening, shortly after making the resignation public. "I had no idea about it."

The news has jolted the foreign ministry with the damning press reports just hot on the heels of the Opposition's outcry at Muscat's reappointment de-



Richard Muscat

spite the National Audit Office's report detailing his squandering of public funds when he headed radio station Voice of the Mediterranean, which went bankrupt under his management.

Clearly disappointed by Mus-

cat's serious sin of omission, the minister is said to have considered the case an extremely embarrassing one particularly in view of the young Muscat's right to diplomatic immunity, preventing Irish police from prosecuting against him.

The story fuelled outrage in Ireland as one of the victims, 20-year-old Christina Leech-Cleary, came out publicly denouncing Massimo Muscat's immunity status that kept him outside the reach of law for the last 10 months. Diplomats and members of their families have immunity from

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The rise and fall of Malta's towns – pages 7-9

Chinese acquire work permits thanks to old "agreement" – page 3

Mater Dei carries unauthorised X-rays on patients

KARL SCHEMBRI

AROUND a dozen patients have been submitted to unauthorised X-rays at the new Mater Dei radiology department in a bid by the hospital authorities to test the new machines even before they are certified as safe.

The incident sparked off an on-site inspection leading to an official stop notice from the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) ordering the new hospital management to cease its practices immediately given the potential risks to patients and staff.

Sources said a number of out-

patients who were scheduled for an X-ray at St Luke's were directed to go to Mater Dei instead where the new state of the art equipment was waiting to be used on them for the first time in the presence of a foreign expert engaged precisely to teach radiographers how to use the machine.

But when an OHSA senior officer went on site to verify a report filed to the authority by hospital staff, the X-ray rooms were forced to close down until the equipment was declared safe.

"A stop order has been issued on the use of X-ray equipment," said the OHSA's senior manager for radiation protection, Paul Brejza,

when contacted Friday.

Sources say the area will remain closed until OHSA ensures that the X-ray facilities and rooms follow international standards meant to offer protection of staff and patients – something that is still pending despite the hospital's official opening last June to much fanfare.

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Gozo's Bishop defends ODZ developments

JAMES DEBONO

THE Church projects mentioned by the Bishop of Gozo Mario Grech in his Santa Marija homily are all situated outside development zones and raise serious environmental concerns.

In his homily to mark the feast of the Assumption, the bishop denounced that while "hotels and other structures are being developed... spiritual sanctuaries, cemeteries and projects to enhance accessibility to churches are being denied permits because some people are arguing they are an environmental disaster."

Contacted by MaltaToday, Bishop Grech's secretary Dun Eddie Zammit revealed that in his 15 August homily the Bishop was referring to the proposed car park next to the Cittadella bastions, the proposed retreat houses next to the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary and two cemeteries, one in Nadur and one

in Xaghra.

All of these applications lie outside development zones and rural conservation areas.

None of the applications mentioned by Dun Eddie Zammit have actually been turned down by MEPA.

The Xaghra Cemetery has already been granted an outline permit by MEPA. The Cittadella car park and the Ta' Pinu sanctuary are all being considered by MEPA. Zammit acknowledged that the Nadur cemetery had been approved by MEPA and that it was only stopped after the courts issued an injunction following a lawsuit by farmers in the area.

Asked why the Bishop was attacking MEPA for turning down permits when this was clearly not the case, Dun Eddie Zammit clarified that: "What the Bishop meant was that in all these cases MEPA was and is still making things difficult for us."

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