

# malta today



Bird hunting

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## Saliba holidayed on Zaren's boat five times

JAMES DEBONO

IN an interview with MaltaToday, Nationalist Party secretary general Joe Saliba confirmed that his two-week stay on construction magnate Zaren Vassallo's 'Princess Charlene' was his "fifth or sixth" holiday on the same boat.

Saliba candidly admits that only last year he was on the same boat with Zaren Vassallo, and that the Labour media had been critical of the government for awarding a tender to other magnate Charles Polidano 'ic-Caqnu' – a tender which was contested by Vassallo. "Last year I went on the same boat with Vassallo. Still, he did not get his tender."

Saliba also reveals that Prime

Minister Lawrence Gonzi was aware of his Mediterranean cruise. "Of course he knew. Half the party must have known."

Saliba says he has no qualms on spending two weeks with the building contractor, insisting he was simply spending time with a friend he knew from the time when he was still a builder and a political nobody. "I've known Zaren for a long time. My origins are in the building industry. Zaren works in construction. I was never his employee but people in the building sector know each other."

Rebutting internal criticism that with an election looming he should have stayed in Malta, Saliba reveals that the PN's strategy is already ready. "But if my work on the campaign is ready, why



shouldn't I take a holiday? Our strategy is ready. Whenever the Prime Minister calls an election we are ready."

Saliba also gives a clear hint on how the PN would conduct its campaign, presenting a doomsday scenario if Labour is elected back to power. "It's a life or death election. I do not have the slightest doubt." **see pages 12-13**

## X-ray machines unfit for Mater Dei's children and emergency department

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE X-ray machine that is meant to be used on children at the new Mater Dei Hospital has been found to be unsuitable for infants given that it does not operate on low radiation doses supposed for young patients, MaltaToday can reveal.

Hospital sources say the machine, which was meant to cater for children and which should have been ordered with specifications to make X-rays safer and quicker for children, turned out to be normal X-ray equipment used on adults.

Installed in what is referred to as the "paediatric room", the machine is said to be unfit for its intended users as children would need equipment that emanates less radiation through low dose filters.

Instead, the equipment installed is known as a fluoroscopy



machine, which allows specialists to study the stomach, intestines and veins but which is not used for normal X-rays, which are in much greater demand.

Sources said there are similar problems at the casualty department, where two X-ray machines were installed but are also unsuitable for generic X-rays required by that unit.

Attempts to contact the hospital authorities and the spokesman for the Mater Dei Hospital over the weekend proved futile. **▶ page 2**

## Mintoff wants MaltaToday owners behind bars



MATTHEW VELLA

IN an unrelenting campaign against this newspaper, former prime minister Dom Mintoff has filed the first-ever criminal libel action against MaltaToday.

'Criminal' libel law contemplates a prison conviction.

The 91-year-old recluse filed his suit against managing director Roger de Giorgio and managing editor Saviour Balzan, in an action that culminates Mintoff's previous attempts to stop this

newspaper from revisiting his exploits as one of Malta's most prominent, and notorious politicians.

The insatiable Mintoff was only recently regaled with a Lm400,000 compensatory gift from the Maltese taxpayer over the construction of the Delimara power station right outside his summer residence, I-Gharix.

Last year an Appeals Court presided over by his former lawyer Philip Sciberras, who represented Mintoff in his Delimara compensation case prior to be-

ing appointed judge, raised a Lm250 fine from a previous libel suit against MaltaToday to Lm2,000.

In a comment, managing director Roger de Giorgio said, "We

take libel actions very seriously, this is not only a case about fair comment but more importantly about revisionism. Yet this will not stop us from writing about Mintoff or any other relevant

subject. Mintoff has always hit out at those who attempted to portray him as the man he really was. For years, writing about this man and his legacy was impossible. That time is up." **▶ page 5**

## THUMBS DOWN FOR TA' CENC VILLAS FROM EU COMMISSION

The Ta' Cenc developers, already at odds with the Structure Plan, could face another insurmountable obstacle to their designs: the European Commission.

The EC is calling on the Maltese authorities not to authorise further development in Ta' Cenc which would risk the integrity of sites that should have been proposed as Special Protected Areas.

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