

maltatoday



Charmaine Gauci

Sunday, 30 September 2007 – issue 412

www.maltatoday.com.mt

pages 10-11 ▶

Budget planned for 8 October

AN early budget – one of the earliest ever – is being planned for the 8 October, government sources told MaltaToday, but a series of consultative meetings will need to be held before confirmation of the date.

The early budget is meant to initiate the Opposition into believing that a November election is imminent. The Nationalist machine, captained by secretary-general Joe Saliba, is hoping an early run for the election battlefields may leave Labour gasping for breath.

Labour has been primed for the electoral race for the past year now, enjoying constant highs as they capitalised on political scandals and corruption in departments and ministries, bungling bureaucrats, and the usual missives over governance and economic stewardship.

With an election just round the corner, there is no doubt the forthcoming budget is all about pleasing people's pockets. With this trump card in hand, an early budget can send Labour onto a premature offensive, sensing an election is in the offing.

While Gonzi plays for time, a positive budget may neutralise Labour's electioneering arsenal. By the time Gonzi calls the election, the post-budget effect, the Christmas festivities, the celebrations for the accession to the Eurozone and the final migration into Mater Dei hospital would have been massaged into the people's psyche.

Labour's false start will then have to contend with the Nationalists' reversal of fortunes, who would call an election in rosier times.

The budget gamble – see page 9

The crucifix, Sant and Gonzi

KARL SCHEMBRI

IT'S the way of the cross again for Alfred Sant as the Nationalist Party puts the Opposition leader's personal religious beliefs under the spotlight in highlighting his "refusal to kiss the crucifix when taking an oath".

Last Wednesday, Sant appeared in court in a libel case instituted against him by Water Services chairman Michael Falzon but the news item that caught the Nationalist media's attention

▶ page 2

PN closes the gap

JAMES DEBONO

A SURVEY conducted by MaltaToday in the aftermath of last Thursday mass party activities which inaugurated the electoral campaign the two big parties are practically neck to neck with the PN enjoying a slight 0.4% advantage over the MLP.

The survey follows a poor performance by Opposition Leader Alfred Sant when addressing a crowd in Birzebugia which sharply contrasted with an upbeat speech by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi at the Granaries on the same night.

In what is turning out to be a Presidential-style election, respondents were asked who they would prefer as their Prime Minister after the next election. The respondents expressed a clear preference for Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.

While 34 per cent preferred Gonzi, only 22 per cent preferred Alfred Sant. But a substantial 44 per cent still cannot choose between the two party leaders.

In June, Sant was the preferred choice of 32.7 per cent of respondents while Gonzi was chosen by 36 per cent. While Gonzi remains more popular than his own party, Alfred Sant emerges from the survey as less popular than his own party.

Significantly Gonzi enjoys greater appeal among undecided voters.

While Gonzi is the preferred choice of 20 per cent of undecided voters and those who would not vote in a forthcoming election, Sant only enjoys the support of seven per cent among this category of voters.

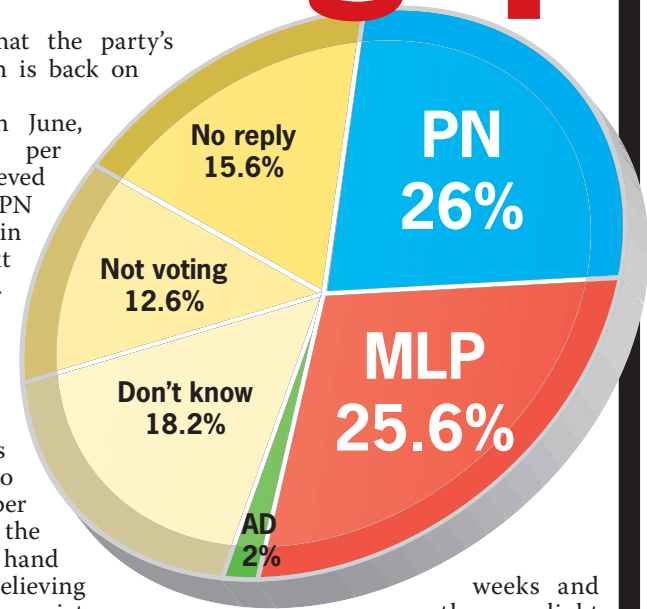
Respondents now consider the prospect of a PN victory as more likely than they did just three months ago – an indi-

cation that the party's campaign is back on track.

Back in June, only 17 per cent believed that the PN could win the next election.

Three months later, that proportion has grown to 24.6 per cent. On the other hand those believing in a Labour victory have declined from 33.7 per cent in June to 25 per cent this week.

But despite Gonzi's popularity, the governing party failed to gain any additional support in the past three



weeks and the very slight advantage it enjoys derives from a five per cent drop in Labour support. One should also note that the PN's advantage falls within the survey's margin of error.

▶ page 9

THE SECRET AGREEMENT WITH JOE SALIBA - SEE PAGE 15

Brussels stirred by EU Ombudsman ruling



European Ombudsman P. Nikiforos Diamandouros

IN a historic first for a Maltese newspaper, the European Ombudsman on Tuesday recognised MaltaToday's right to access to data detailing the allowances received by Malta's five MEPs.

Ombudsman P. Nikiforos Diamandouros said the European Parliament's refusal to grant the newspaper access constituted maladministration and that MEPs have to be aware of the public interest in their use of public funds.

Typically for Malta, although the decision was splashed on several news bulletins including Euronews, no local TV station or newspaper deemed it fit to report the news, save for The Times.

Almost two years after submitting his complaint, Matthew Vella, editor of MaltaToday's Wednesday edition, will be awaiting a decision by the European Parliament to grant this newspaper access to the payments – daily allowances, assistants' salaries and travel allowances – paid to Malta's five MEPs after it was refused access back in August 2005.

The Ombudsman's decision has far-reaching ramifications on the spending trail of 785 European parliamentarians and comes at a time when more transparency and accountability is being called upon the parliament.

▶ see page 3

BAVARIA MOTOR YACHTS

SPECIAL OFFER: FREE MALTA PORT DELIVERY

Unbeatable offers... buy now, pay later scheme
Contact us for an appointment and free admission to the GENOA BOAT SHOW 2007

MECCA ENTERPRISES GROUP

Main Street, St Paul's Bay
MALTA

Tel: 21 573 278 Mob: 7973 2783
www.mecca-marine.com



BAVARIA SPORT: 27 - 30 - 33 - 33HT - 37 - 37HT - 42 - 42HT

Powered by VOLVO PENTA



BAVARIA sport SERIES

