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Sant's surprise appearance triggers PN panic attack

THERE could not have been more of a worse case scenario, according to PN insiders who spoke to MaltaToday.

PN bigwigs were last Monday spiralling in a state of panic at the announcement that Labour leader Alfred Sant would be holding a premature press conference, almost a week after being discharged from hospital after having had a malignant colon tumour removed.

Fuelled by the thought that Sant would be announcing his resignation, the PN's inner circle was worried that the departure of Sant from party leader, at such a crucial moment, would be a recipe for a sure defeat at the polls for the PN.

The Prime Minister has up to August of this year to call an election.

But with leaks from Labour's inner circle to the PN now close to non-existent, the PN was unable to decipher what was behind Sant's thinking when he faced journalists with the details surrounding his condition. It had been clear to them that Alfred Sant would return to public life in the next general conference, as expected.

Little did they know that Alfred Sant had unilaterally decided to put an end to rumours about his health by spilling the beans in a press conference.

Unexpectedly called just hours before a TV debate on his health

on PBS, Alfred Sant appeared explaining in detail his medical condition and intervention. His conference was also intended to take the wind out of the sails of Bondiplus, which later that evening discussed the Labour leader's condition. Although it could have well served to give the PBS host's programme even more credence.

When the nature of the press conference became known the news came as a pleasant anti-climax to PN strategists who could not imagine how the coming of a new political leader at the helm of the Labour party would be tackled by the PN campaign.

Polls at I-iStamperija suggest that the PN could only win the

next election with a slim majority and that it would be a relative majority, an electoral development that is gravitated by the participation of two smaller parties, green party Alternattiva Demokratika and Azzjoni Nazzjonali.

Needless to say, Alfred Sant's reluctance to step down in the light of his serious medical condition is now being turned into an opportunity by the PN strategists.

The whispering campaign at Pieta is that the ship of State will need a strong captain to weather the storm, and the PN is fomenting this perception based on its belief that the electorate prefers strong and invincible political leaders.



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SILVIO CAMILLERI



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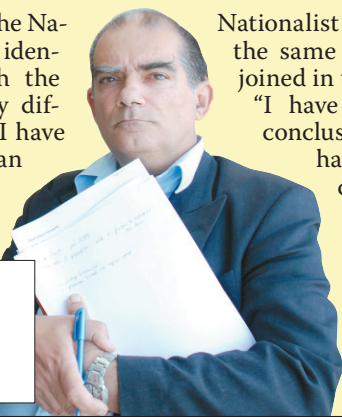


Wenzu Mintoff on the politics of revisionism in Demarco's autobiography

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Revealed: Cacopardo's PN resignation letter

"WHEN I joined the Nationalist Party I identified myself with the party without any difficulty. But today I have been making an effort for a long time, asking myself whether the



Carmel Cacopardo yesterday gave his first press conference in his new role with AD

Nationalist Party is still the same party which I joined in the Seventies.

"I have come to the conclusion that if I had to make the choice today, I wouldn't have chosen to join."

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Michael Falzon's 'hunting party' dead birds confiscated

MATTHEW VELLA

A hunting party that included Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon had its wild bird carcasses confiscated by the chief veterinary officer upon returning from Romania for testing for avian influenza (bird flu).

The hunting holiday organised by Richard Cilia – a former PRO of the Federazzjoni Kaccaturi Nasaba Konservazzjonisti (FKNK), and who is now a council member – took place last December.

Cilia is considered to be one of the hunting lobby's most militant activists, and his trip to Romania with the MLP deputy leader Michael Falzon confirms the close ties between Falzon and FKNK members. Falzon has often remarked he does not practise hunting in Malta, except on trips abroad.

The luggage of the hunting party was confiscated by customs officials at Malta International Airport upon arriving from Romania since it contained 21 pieces of bird skins of wild ducks and other birds which had to be tested for bird flu.

Speaking to MaltaToday this week, Falzon said his luggage was not among those confiscated for testing.

"I received a notification to collect my luggage from customs when it arrived in Malta, since we had already landed earlier on a different plane. I collected my luggage and there was nothing irregular – my luggage was not confiscated and it was retrieved regularly," Falzon said, while repeatedly warning he would serve this newspaper with a suit for criminal libel over any irregularities. Michael Falzon has served MaltaToday with several libel

Daphne denies cosmetic surgery, tells Jason to stop being ridiculous



KARL SCHEMBRI

STAR columnist Daphne Caruana Galizia has rubbished Jason Micallef's claims that she underwent cosmetic surgery to her "face, breast and backside", calling on the MLP Secretary ▶ page 12

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