

mid week

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ELECTIONS

24 DAYS TO GO

PN



ENVIRONMENTAL REFORMS

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi announces he will ditch finance portfolio and instead take up MEPA reform.

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MLP



HOUSING AID

Opposition leader Alfred Sant pledges subsidies on interest rates for first-time buyers.

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AD



GONZI GIMMICK

Harry Vassallo calls Gonzi's proposal to take personal responsibility for MEPA reform "a cheap gimmick".

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AN



LESS TAXES

Azzjoni Nazzjonali want less taxes on businesses and tax investigations which do not go any further than two years back

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Ornis passes the buck to Pullicino

No final decision on spring hunting, which means more pressure on the Environment Minister to decide himself



RAPHAEL VASSALLO

HUNTERS and birders alike were left without a satisfactory answer regarding whether or not this year's spring hunting season will open as usual, after the Ornis Committee met yesterday but failed to make any recommendations in view of the pending case against Malta in the European Court of Justice

The Ornis Committee is composed of representatives of the hunters' and environ-

mentalist lobbies, and convened yesterday at the MEPA offices in Floriana for a meeting which lasted just over three hours.

On the agenda were the dates for this year's spring hunting season: Malta being the only EU member state to still permit the taking of wild game during the breeding season. But in view of the ongoing infringement procedures, the committee simply decided not to take any decision at all.

The resulting impasse is likely to add to the growing

tension surrounding an already volatile situation. Each year since accession to the European Union in 2004, the government has opened the spring hunting season in defiance of the European Commission's objections, insisting that it had secured a special exemption during pre-accession negotiations. However, the EC has argued that such an exemption can only apply in the absence of any reasonable alternative; and that in any case, Malta had never actually sent in a formal appli-

cation for any derogation.

After the government refused to phase out spring hunting late last year, the Commission finally opened a case against Malta in the European Court of Justice on February 1, requesting the court to take interim measures in the event that the government opens the season while the case is still under way.

The spring season usually opens around 10 April and lasts until 22 May.

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Who's afraid of the big bad coalition?

JAMES DEBONO PG 8,9

No comment from Alfred Sant on di-ve.com's political muzzling

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE Malta Labour Party greeted Go's decision to stop its news portal di-ve.com from

reporting political events with silence and an official "no comment" from its leader Alfred Sant.

Telecoms company Go is claiming it has "not enough

resources" to cover the general elections after announcing a new corporate policy that di-ve.com would not report any political day-to-day news throughout the election.

MaltaToday is informed that government officials exerted pressure on the company after claiming the news portal was leaning too much towards Labour in its coverage. The deci-

sion brought with it the condemnation of the European Federation of Journalists and solidarity of other Maltese media.

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