

ELECTION SPECIAL

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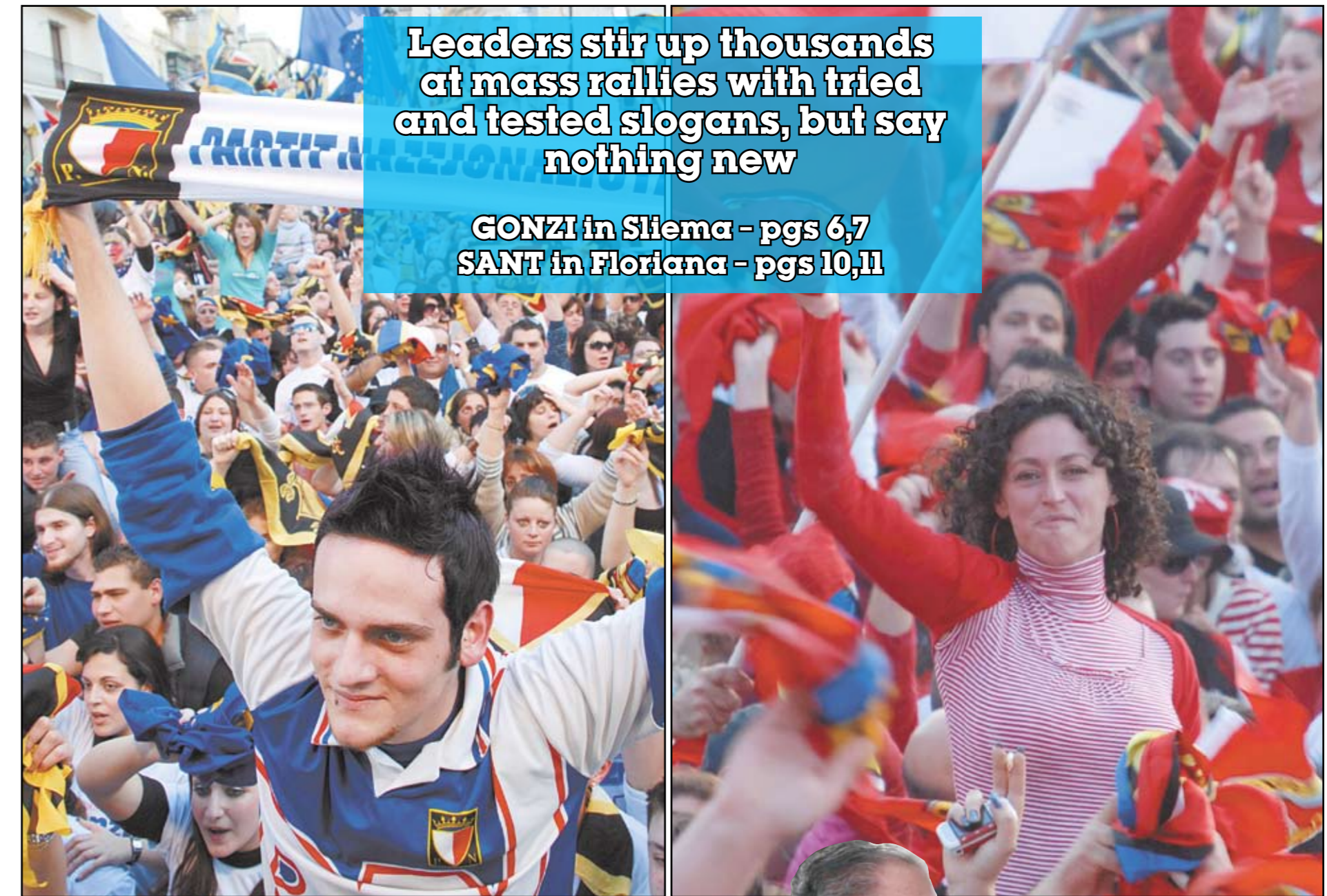
ELECTIONS
12
DAYS TO GO



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HYPE SUNDAY



Leaders stir up thousands at mass rallies with tried and tested slogans, but say nothing new

GONZI in Sliema - pgs 6,7
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NATIONALISTS SQUARELY BEAT MLP ON ENVIRONMENT **mt SURVEY** pg 3 >

SHOCKING! **JOSIE'S 'ENEMIES OF THE STATE' SPEECH** pg 9 >

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Labour 'poor' on education, says Gonzi



High on the hug - PN leader Lawrence Gonzi makes his entrance in Bormla with a round of hugs from his voters

And kisses too - zealousness turns into affection as Lawrence Gonzi takes his seat

MATTHEW VELLA

PRIME Minister Lawrence Gonzi yesterday laid emphasis once again on Labour's proposal to introduce an extra 'reception' class for kindergarten children, denouncing it as a repeater year.

"Labour are just stubborn on this issue," Gonzi said during his public dialogue in Cospicua's Gavino Gulia square.

"They are trying to hang on what Lord Adonis has claimed in a study on the reception class when Labour's proposal is nothing like what is being done in the UK. And it's us, the Nationalist Party, which has uncovered this deception."

Gonzi said that a gulf is separating the PN from the MLP in education, and called on voters not to let political affiliation come in the way

of choosing an education. "This is not a question of being Labour or Nationalist. The question is whether you want a government that will have your children repeat a year in their education. And it would be a big loss and a big mistake for our country. We would be ruining our only resource in our country if Labour is elected."

Harking back to the 1980s in

a recollection of the clashes between the Labour government and university students, Gonzi paid tribute to foreign minister Michael Frendo, a protagonist of those days as a university student. "Labour's proposals for MCAST and the university are poor," Gonzi said.

Yesterday, the government also inaugurated the St Ignatius

college in Qormi, with Gonzi announcing a new school to be built in Verdala, Cospicua. He also said a new PN government wanted cruise liners berthing at Senglea alongside berths currently used by the dockyard, while adding he "hoped the GWU won't order actions" against their proposals.

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Sant hits back at The Times: they wrote about puddings

WAKING up to the news that Francis Zammit Dimech will be suing him for libel over the interview appearing yesterday in The Sunday Times, Alfred Sant hit back at the newspaper's editorial stand challenging him to bring forward evidence of corruption instead of shooting from the hip.

"The Opposition leader makes a damning implicit admission: that he is making statements which undoubtedly damage people's reputations without having anything but gossip and hearsay to back them up," said The Sunday Times leader yesterday under the title 'The proof of the pudding'. "This is not acceptable in pub conversation, let alone on the political platform."

Speaking during the Sunday morning newspaper analysis



Simone Cini tends to bring out the best in Sant, who looked 'cool and relaxed' on Il-Hadd ma' l-Ahbar, on One TV

programme on One TV presented by Simone Cini, Sant de-

ridged the Times for its stand. "They wrote about puddings,"

he told the presenter as she broached the subject. "Truth is,

they don't even bother investigating corruption."

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PN squarely beats Labour on environmental issues



James Debono

18% think AD has best policy on environment

MALTATODAY'S ongoing electoral survey has revealed that while 39% think the Nationalist Party has the best environmental policy, only 23% think likewise on the Labour Party. 18% say Alternattiva Demokratika has the best environmental policy.

But among those aged between 18 and 34, AD is judged to have a better environmental policy than the more established Malta Labour Party.

This shows that although overall the PN is deemed to have the best environmental policies, a political force like AD which is still aspiring to enter parliament is deemed to have the best environmental policy by a fifth of the Maltese population.

This emerges from a survey conducted among 900 respondents held last week.

Surprisingly, after a turbulent five years which saw the Gonzi-led administration clashing with environmentalists on major issues like the Xaghra l-Hamra golf course, the redevelopment of

Ulysses Lodge in Ramla l-Hamra and the extension of development zones, the PN retains a significant lead on this issue.

The survey comes in the wake of Lawrence Gonzi's promise to redress the country's "environmental deficit" by taking the Malta Environment and Planning Authority into his own hands if elected back to power. It corresponds with the importance given to sustainable development in the PN's electoral programme.

The survey indicates that the PN's strategy of backtracking from controversial development like the Xaghra l-Hamra golf course and the Ramla l-Hamra development coupled with measures to control the construction industry have helped to restore the party's green credentials.

Still, while 39% prefer the PN's green policies, 43% prefer the policies of the other three opposition parties. But only 23% deem the MLP's environmental policies as the best.

The poor result achieved by the

MLP shows the party's failure to capitalise on discontentment created by the onslaught of development over the past years.

The MLP's manifesto also sends contradictory messages on the environment, with the party still supporting the development of golf courses and a yacht marina in Gozo and refraining from taking a commitment to reverse the extension of development zones. The party's ambivalent stand on hunting could also dent the party's green image.

Even MLP voters show a degree of scepticism on their party's environmental policy: a third of MLP voters refrain from expressing a preference for their own party's policy, with 10% opting for AD as the party with the best policy on the environment, 2.4% opting for the PN and 21% expressing no preference at all.

The survey result also reflects AD's historic role in raising the profile of environmental issues and its consistent opposition to spring hunting, golf courses and mega development.

This is especially the case among younger voters aged between 18 and 34. Among this category while 26% express a preference for AD's environmental policies only 14.4% express a preference for the MLP's policies.

But while 18% prefer AD's envi-

ronmental policies to those of the rival two parties, only 2.6% would vote for the Greens in the forthcoming election. In fact 42.8% of those who think that AD has the best environmental policies are equally split between the PN and MLP. Only 11% of these would vote for AD.

This is an indication that the environment is not such a primary concern for these voters who are swayed to vote for the other par-

ties. Yet significantly, 44% of those who prefer AD's environmental policies are either undecided or refuse to divulge their voting intentions in the next elections.

This could be an indication that the battle for the green vote is still raging and that some potential green voters are still undecided whether to follow their instincts or to choose the lesser evil between the big parties.

Which party has the best policies on the environment? (%)		Voting preference for those who believe AD has best green policies (%)	
PN	38.7	PN	21.4
MLP	22.8	MLP	21.4
AD	18.4	AD	11.4
AN	1.5	AN	0
None	3.9	Not voting	1.4
Don't know	14.6	Don't know	30.7
No reply	0.1	No reply	13.6

By age groups (%)							
	PN	MLP	AD	AN	None	Don't know	No reply
18-34	39.9	14.4	26.1	1.3	2.6	15.7	0
35-54	32.5	24.2	19.7	1.4	4.6	17.7	0
55+	43.9	27.8	7.8	1.3	4	14.9	0.3

Methodology
The survey was held between Monday 18 and Thursday 21 February. A total of 1,638 respondents were randomly selected from the telephone directory with 900 accepting to be interviewed. The survey was stopped as soon as the 900 quota target was reached. The survey results were weighed according to the age and sex distribution of the population in the 2006 demographic review. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.26%.

Care for your children?
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Choose Labour.

'We have no regrets'



In perfect tandem - Lawrence Gonzi and wife Kate greet supporters at yesterday's mass meeting in Sliema, and below left, the DNA jibe by Charles Mangion is sent up by a Nationalist supporter who says is proud of his genetic make-up



JULIA FARRUGIA

LAWRENCE Gonzi defined the past four years as a success story which embraces a winning track record for the electoral to analyse before the general election.

"We are here in Sliema to show you a track record that makes you all proud," a well-focused Gonzi told a densely packed Dingli Street. "And we have no regrets," he insisted time and again throughout his 1hr 35 min speech.

For the most part, the mass meeting message was geared towards youths and students... a clear indication that the PN intends targeting the 17,000+ first-time voters.

Lawrence Gonzi said that he came to Sliema armed with a list of results attained by his Government during the past five years, and entreated the people to judge him on these achievements.

Then came a punchy list of Gonzi's feats: "We have reached a historical record in tourism; in 2007 we had a 4% economic growth which stands much higher than that of other EU countries; we have 169,000 gainfully occupied workers, by far the largest number; and in the past years we created more than 20,000 new jobs..."

Lawrence Gonzi highlighted other achievements, including the accomplished target to reduce the deficit to the lowest rate ever. The PN leader also re-

iterated his pledge that by 2010, he will reach his ambitious goal to end the year with a surplus instead of a deficit.

And the list went on: "During the past legislature we improved social benefits and we gave children's allowance to all," Gonzi stressed. "We've strengthened education, we upgraded schools and we built a new hospital."

And he relentlessly attacked the credibility of the Labour Party throughout. "How can the MLP and its leader say that the country is at a standstill when we have introduced the euro, the strongest currency?"

"The euro is the certificate showing that the government and its policies have claimed a success for our country," Gonzi claimed.

But Lawrence Gonzi, aware of the areas where his popularity has been dented, also had a few confessions to make.

"We were not perfect, there are more things that need to be done. We believe in our country. We're here holding our results so that you can judge us on these accomplishments."

On the environment, he said: "I admit that we did not succeed in attaining what people expected. Yes we could have done better. In five years' time I want to come again in Sliema and tell you that the environment did improve," said a firm Gonzi.

Then came another apology, this time on Mater Dei. Lawrence Gonzi said that he personally understands that until things settle down there will be certain problems in the hospital. He referred to one of his party manifesto's 353 proposals: to eradicate waiting lists. At the same time he beseeched healthcare professionals and patients to cooperate.

And then, Gonzi addressed the medical doctors' brain drain.

Gonzi said that people need to thank their General Practitioner. "It would be a huge mistake if we took the family doctor for granted," Gonzi said. Repeatedly during his address, PN leader promised a way of doing politics that is different to the Labour Party's.

"Whom do you want to trust? That party which wants to create 25,000 new jobs, or the party which wants to create 6,000?"

In the same breath he also slammed the labour leader for his orchestrated mud-slinging campaign, accusing various Nationalist ministers of corruption.

"Every time we had a report (on corruption), we sent it directly to the Commissioner of Police to be investigated," he said, inviting the crowd to "judge both parties on what they do, even when it comes to corruption."

Gonzi was forced to make numerous, lengthy pauses as his

speech was 'interrupted' by huge bursts of applause, for the most part by young people... whose presence was also evidenced by a striking, enormous banner with the words "Studenti ma' Gonzi" ("the students are with Gonzi").

And not without good reason: for the Prime Minister reiterated the pledge made on campus last Monday that he would not only retain the University stipends, but also augment them.

Gonzi also advised young people not to trust the MLP, implying that Sant's intention was to take back the 10% grant which young people will benefit on their first property. He asked the younger generation whether they wanted to trust a Sant government on the overtime issue.

Describing the MLP's overtime proposal as a "soap opera", Gonzi warned against a fiasco if Labour is returned to power after March 8: "Alfred Sant already did this with his own workers (at One Productions), let alone with all the Maltese," Gonzi insisted.

Then Maltese Premier also had some sobering advice for the younger audience members.

"Stay calm. Don't react to provocation. Mobilise your friends and your family so that on the 8th of March you give an answer. And then shout more than when we were at the University," Gonzi bellowed.

The Nationalist leader insisted on more than one occasion that Nationalists should not take anything for granted. People need to chase every single vote on every single day. "I invite you all - be the ambassadors for the Maltese and Gozitans!"

At one point, Lawrence Gonzi stated that his party is not afraid to face hurdles and he even claimed that he always answers questions.

"We address challenges and do not postpone them. And what about the questions? We answer them and do not run away. And if someone criticises us, we listen; and we do not call him hamallu (lout)."

More applause was reserved for the Prime Minister's promise to pay special attention to the environment. Gonzi declared that environmental issues would in fact be his top priority: to the extent that out of the €855 million allocated to Malta, more than one third - €300 million - would be invested in the environment.

The Prime Minister also outlined his party's promise of a reform of the tax bands, offering a package which he claimed would provide incentives for more workers to enter the labour market and above all, earn more money.

"Our policies will also serve so that more and better employment is created in our country," Prime Minister Gonzi declared.

HIGH POINTS

- Gonzi's delivery was impeccable as always: able to rouse the audience's enthusiasm, by creating the right tempo, building to a well-managed climax without getting hysterical.
- Gonzi's list of attained targets: convincing, inspiring and a complete show of trust in the Maltese people.
- Gonzi addressing the younger generation: "I invite you, be the ambassadors of the Maltese and Gozitans." Thumbs up on a campaign level considering that in this election there are around 17,000 new voters aged between 18 and 23.

LOW POINTS

- The young girl who is the poster child for the PN's electoral programme and environment billboard presented a yellow daisy (lelluxa) to Gonzi and his wife - an inane stage-managed gesture, which also raises questions about the gratuitous use of children in political campaigns.
- Gonzi's reference to the MLP overtime "soap opera" was accompanied by a TV close up of a ONE News cameraman. This was dangerously provocative.
- Gonzi happily announced that in a few days' time, he will open a retirement home in Mellieha. Ok, one of those election stunts a few days before D-day. Anything but impressive...



Arnold Cassola, Mario Mallia and Alternattiva Demokratika chairperson Harry Vassallo at yesterday's AD rally for party activists

PHOTOGRAPH BY GILBERT CALLEJA

Harry Vassallo's 'silent revolution'

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Harry Vassallo said that if AD was elected to Parliament, it would bring about a silent revolution in Maltese politics.

Addressing party activists during a meeting at a hotel in St Julian's yesterday morning, Vassallo said AD had been set up to bring forward a change in Malta's political culture. "This challenge is more difficult than, say, winning a local council election."

He called on the people to think with their mind, rather than with their own hearts as the other two main parties are leading voters to do with their scaremongering tactics.

Vassallo said AD was an invisible party as there was no opportunity for its supporters to meet in a mass meeting like the big parties do. "To this day, I still meet new people who tell me that they have been voting AD for the past 18 years."

Vassallo called on the electorate to reflect deeply on their vote. "The decisions that are taken now will affect us for the rest of our lives," he insisted.

Although for the other parties, the 8 March was the ball and end-all of everything, for Vassallo the election date was merely the beginning of a long future.

"Why should we take a decision on the destiny of our kids on the basis of fear? Why should we evaluate the past on the basis of taboos?" the AD leader insisted.

Vassallo said that if AD were elected to Parliament, there would surely be a quiet atmosphere in the country as nobody would have obtained an absolute majority in Parliament; a change from the caracades that generally follow the announcement of a general election result.

Vassallo said that during the past 40 years of one-party government, the two main parties have been found very much wanting in terms of planning.

During this election, only AD mentioned the fact that there are 53,000 vacant properties on the island, 60% of which are in a good condition. "This is the extremity to which the political system of this country has led the country to," Vassallo insisted.

If one had to put all the vacant properties in Malta in a

"Why should we take a decision on the destiny of our kids on the basis of fear?"



single file starting from Pembroke, one would end up at Zebbug. "If they did not do this, then we would not have ended up with the huge problems we are facing today," he said.

To fill them all up, Malta's population would have to increase by around 200,000 people. But Malta does not have enough resources such as water and electricity to cope with all that added demand.

"We have wasted these resources in a criminal way

ing to a national crisis. "Economic reality will soon catch up with us, and everybody will be affected."

"The fruit of the work of our grandfathers and fathers, who invested all their savings to build their properties, will be wiped off completely," Vassallo warned.

He said the other parties would never agree to pass in Parliament a law regulating the financing of political parties as long as the strings of their purses were controlled by the donations of building contractors.

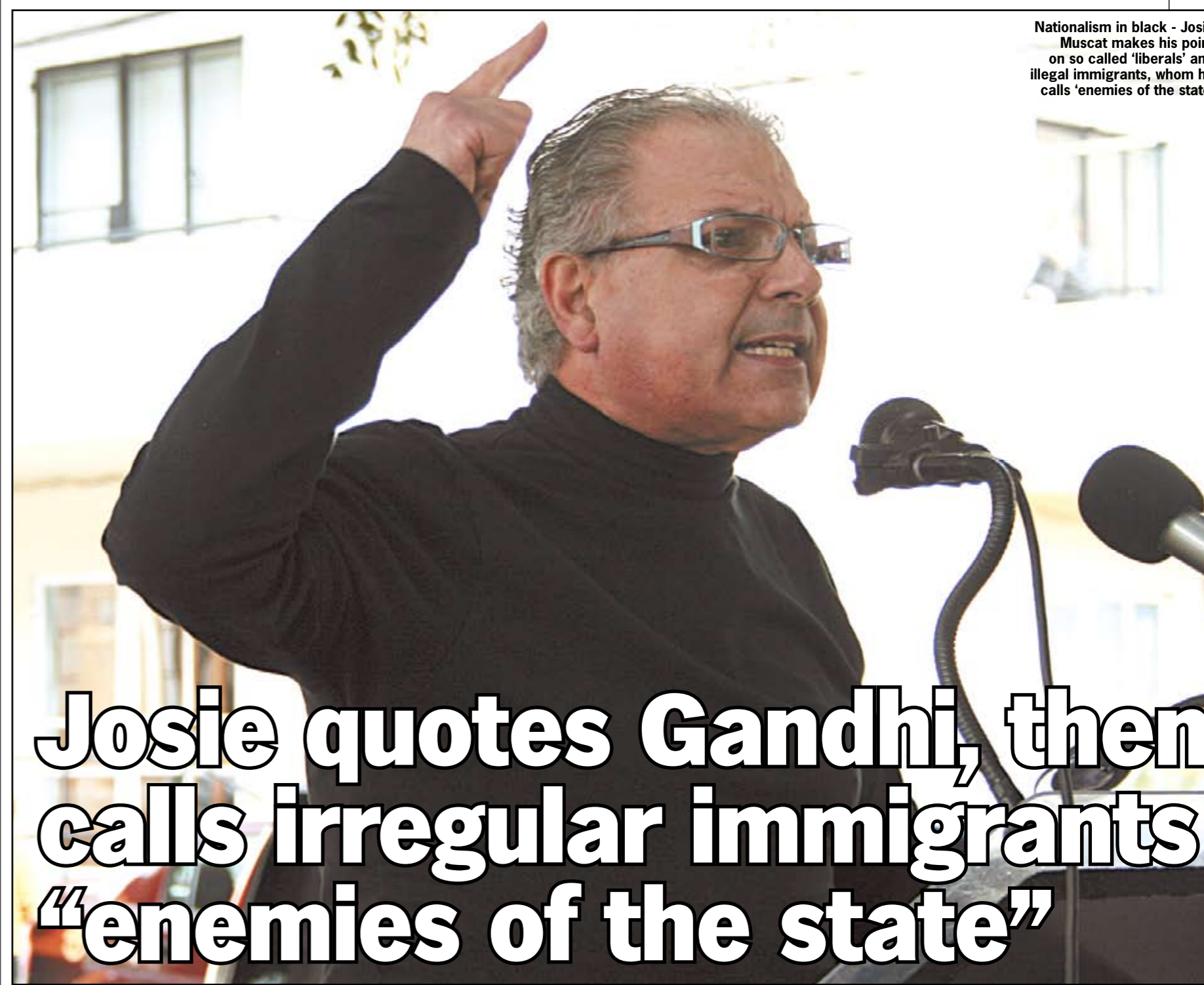
Vassallo explained the one of the reasons why AD was set up in 1989 was in reaction to the corruption that was rife in the 1970s and 1980s. He said that on the basis of the testimony supplied by AD, a former Minister had been found guilty of corruption.

Since its inception, AD has always insisted on a law regulating the financing of political parties.

Among the people who attended the AD meeting there was self-styled PN dissident Jo Said, who arrived just before the meeting started at 10am.

He warned that the current property glut will burst, leading

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Josie quotes Gandhi, then calls irregular immigrants "enemies of the state"

Nationalism in black - Josie Muscat makes his point on so-called 'liberals' and illegal immigrants, whom he calls 'enemies of the state'

DAVID DARMANIN

AT a Zebbug public meeting organised by Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN) yesterday, far-right political leader Josie Muscat chose to start his speech with a line first uttered by Indian pacifist Mahatma Gandhi. Ironically, the quote served as a platform for Muscat to aggressively lash out at liberals, the printed media, the anti-hunting lobby and irregular immigrants, referring to the latter as "enemies of the state."

"First they laugh at you, then they ignore you, then they fight with you, then you win," he said. "These words were uttered by none other than Gandhi, the

man who fought against the British Empire, not against the handful of coarse (erbat iqlafat) journalists who are trying to destroy what we are fighting for," he shouted to an audience of around 50, most of whom were evidently hunters.

"We have been dubbed 'heartless' and 'cruel' because we speak about illegal immigration," he stated. "We hold nothing against human beings, and this must be said. However, our country is far too populated to be able to sustain this invasion." Conscious of the warlike imagery being used, Muscat qualified his earlier statement: "And I use this word 'invasion' because our situation constitutes one, as stated by international law. The invader is an enemy of the state."

"And then a handful of wise, compassionate people," he sarcastically carried on, "will tell us to let them (immigrants) turn into Maltese, like us. Why don't they say how much money they're getting from the EU?"

"Look at what happened in Italy, France, England and

Germany," he thundered. "In the beginning, people of these countries were told that they (immigrants) would soon leave. Instead, they kept on hatching, causing huge problems. Now they want to get rid of them and do not know where to start from because these people have become Italian, French, English and German, like them. What will happen in Malta in 50 years' time?"

Muscat went on to define the coming election as a "referendum... for you to choose whether you want this abuse to carry on. In Malta they're already hatching, you know?"

Echoing FKNK secretary Lino Farrugia almost word for word, Muscat launched a tirade against BirdLife Malta's executive director Tolga Temuga: "We don't need any Turk telling us what to do," he said. "We are capable enough to decide between us Maltese. We believe that everyone has a right to this pastime, so long as it is done within the parameters of law. We are against any type of abuse, and we cannot possibly defend any abuser," he continued.

"Newspaper pundits are such hypocrites (jaccoli)," he added. "We have recognised the right to hunt and they have written against us. Such jealous and spiteful people! This is simply because they never managed to do anything worthy in their lives. Let me tell you what hypocrites these journalists are. France and England spend massive amounts of money on weaponry and they say nothing, and then



AN's Zebbug activity included a display of birds, in line with its support of the hunting lobby

(cwiec u bla mohh). "I spoke to a teacher," he summed, "who assigned her pupils to write an essay about their fathers. Astonishingly, one of three fathers he should write about. Another teacher told that most of the secondary school girls she teaches are expecting a child, and those who aren't, left out."

Muscat reserved his most scathing attack for Maltese liberals: "These liberals want Malta to end up looking like a zoo, where we all end up jumping on the liberals. This is the situation that handful of coarse newspaper journalists..."

"The more you attack us, more we speak. If you, the liberals, are attacking us, it means we're right. So let them look at all of our candidates' history since birth. As if I'm scared that handful of coarse newspaper journalists..."

On yesterday's edition, Malta Today revealed that one of AN's candidates has a criminal record featuring numerous convictions on charges of theft and drug possession; another is facing charges of money-laundering, while another is in court over incitement to racial hatred, while another again stands accused of illegally occupying public land.

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Josie Muscat - Firebrand

Sant keeps thousands pumped up as he reaches out to sceptics

KARL SCHEMBRI

AN energetic Alfred Sant kept the tempo high as he faced thousands of Labour supporters who gathered at the Floriana Granaries for the party's third mass meeting in this election campaign yesterday.

With the crowd roused earlier by his deputy Michael Falzon who stirred up "the mass of lions" forming "Labour united", Sant gave a 45-minute speech entreating people to "choose Labour" – a phrase repeated throughout his speech in which he also claimed to defend the right of those who disagreed with his party.

"We'll be the enemy of bureaucracy, the enemy of every form of corruption, the enemy of every form of nepotism," Sant said. "Our invitation is finding resonance among those who were sceptical about us. Whoever disagrees with us has a right to disagree with us and we won't be the ones to boo them."

Sant said his initial estimate that the Nationalists would spin "one lie a day" was a modest estimate now that they were "hatching around 100 lies daily".

He went on to warn people

working in a wide range of sectors to stay on their guard against the "multitude of lies" coming from the PN.

Without referring to the reception class proposal by name, Sant said his party's measure would be implemented gradually after discussions with parents and teachers, "not in the bat of an eyelid", and only after there is agreement about it.

"It's an invitation we're making to all the Maltese and all Gozitans, with the determination to safeguard Malta's interests, the national interests; an invitation we make with conviction: Choose Labour, because we care for the future of all of you," Sant told the massive crowd in front of him.

Choosing Labour meant choosing the party that put the families and work at the centre of its policies, Sant said.

He reiterated his pledge to cut hospital waiting lists by 15 per cent every year.

"We have to implement this for that elderly woman who has been waiting years for a knee replacement, for that woman who is waiting for her breast screening appointment, for those children waiting for an eye check-up. And we'll do it."

Falzon set the scene earlier by talking about giving jobs to

the Maltese people as opposed to foreigners – a cue taken later although somehow more subtly by Sant when he said more Maltese youths will be trained to work in financial services where many foreigners are employed – a sector which under Labour will purportedly see "double or triple" the amount of existing jobs in four years' time.

"We had the lowest rate of job creation in 50 years," Sant said about Gonzi's government. "A total of 1,500 full-time jobs were lost in the last four years. We'll create 6,000 in manufacturing and industry."

Giving a whole list of abandoned sites, projects and dilapidated historical buildings – from St Elmo to Dock no.1 to Fort Chambray – Sant said his government would improve what is already good and upgrade and utilise the country's most beautiful resources.

"Since Independence our country made great strides in tourism, except under GonziPN," Sant said, moving on to sister paper's Illum front page story of yesterday about the tourism minister's private use of Russian ballet dancers whose trip was sponsored by the tourism authority.

"Last year's tourism boom happened without any credit to Francis Zammit Dimech, who instead of being interested in tourism is more interested in watching Russian dancers for his personal shows," Sant lashed out.

He claimed that under Labour, tourism would generate €1.5 billion a year.

Promising a generous budget for Gozo "so they could promote it themselves", the re-introduction of the subsidised helicopter service, a golf course and yacht marinas in the Gozitan island, Sant also pledged to upgrade the Bugibba zone and to "give back the south the respect it deserves".

Lambasting the government for doing nothing when faced with the closure of Jerma Palace Hotel, he promised "a big five-star hotel in the south" and also "to give full attention from central government" to the region. The dilapidated Dock no.1 seemed like "broken dentures", he said.

Also reiterating his pledge of zero tolerance on corruption, Sant said any accusation of corruption that is levelled at anyone under his government would be seriously investigated.

Ignore the surveys

Michael Falzon told the crowd to "ignore the surveys" that were coming out in what seemed a clear reference to

We'll be the enemy of bureaucracy, the enemy of every form of corruption, the enemy of every form of nepotism

the results published in Sunday's MaltaToday showing the PN winning slight support over Labour for the first time in the campaign.

"The best surveys are not those the others are coming up with," Falzon told Labour supporters. "You are the best survey; you will give the best survey on 8 March."

Falzon made his customary fiery entry referring to the "lions of change" and chanting in typical football victory celebration fashion. "We're here among the Floriana lions, next to the Valletta lions, together with the lions who will be voting on 8 March for change," he said. "You're the magic of this country."

Falzon then narrowed down his speech on employing more Maltese, as opposed to foreigners.

"Employ the Maltese, and we'll take care of you," he said to foreign investors. "We agree with Smart City, but we want the Maltese and the Gozitans to work there. They boast of having opened a Lm300 million hospital... yet it lacks Maltese workers."

Falzon also promised a Labour government would "not forget" shipyard workers and that their jobs would be safeguarded – despite this being the last year of subsidies for the 'yards according to EU commitments.

He referred to former Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa who made his case with the EU to save the Gdansk shipyards, and the same will happen under a Labour government with the collaboration of the European Socialists.

"We will discuss with our colleagues of the Party of European Socialists, who have already given us a certificate that the MLP is a Maltese party and a European party," Falzon said.

Downplaying the PN's environmental credentials, Falzon said it was only lately that Lawrence Gonzi "discovered wind energy".

"I'll tell him he'll face more than wind, he'll face the gale of change," he said.

The other deputy leader, Charles Mangion, challenged Gonzi to deny that he was about to raise the cost of gas cylinders and to start charging for government healthcare.

He claimed a Labour government would strengthen Air Malta while the PN would "continue dismantling it".

Like Falzon, Mangion also promised the shipyards would be viable again.

"You are not a burden on the country," he told 'yard workers. "We have great ambitions for you."

HIGH POINTS

- Quite atypical of Sant, who has a habit of antagonising dissenters, he defended the right of those who disagreed with his party
- Keeping a constant high, Sant also managed to avoid the gloomy, monotone type of speeches he tends to lapse into after the first five minutes

LOW POINTS

- Repeating 'Choose Labour' ad nauseam, at times Sant screamed it as if it was an order. It's true 'aghzel Labour' is, grammatically, in the imperative but try make it sound as if it is a free choice please, Dr Sant
- Charles Mangion mistakenly refers to the Granaries as ix-Xaghra, instead of the Fossos. "Ix-Xaghra isn't big enough for us," he said to the multitudes. Sorry Charles, that's the ground opposite



If this is not irresponsible then what is?

I believe we are truly missing one very important twist in this deluge of electoral promises.

The first is the political conviction that we are going to live forever in a Nanny State that provides for everything and everyone.

Instead of moving onto a more just system where welfare supports those in real need, we still have politicians promising more and more freebies.

Both Sant and Gonzi accuse each other of wanting to put a charge on the health service and put a price tag on services. Both deny with vengeance they intend to cut free services.

But... why shouldn't there be a price tag? Why should health be free for everyone and everything? Why shouldn't we be talking of providing essential services free only to those who have a certain income bracket, instead of providing everything for free?

If Gonzi and Sant cannot bear to live with it, then here it is. You are irresponsible to offer everything for free. Were it not for European membership obligations and directives, they would be more irresponsible still.

The electricity bill, which is still heavily subsidised when compared to other EU countries, is to be halved for all households and offered next to free to needy families.

It is of course very nice, but what goes up must always come down. Someone will have to finance all this crazy and outdated Marxist way of doing things. Who said that we have no left wing in Malta? We have two socialist parties living on the moon. To get themselves elected they are willing to wreck their own good work. It is awfully sad.

Both Gonzi and Sant have rushed to wear this mantle of traditional stuffy left-wing politics which promises everything for nothing.

Every sector of Maltese society is being offered a free figolla. And the answer to the money question is to be found in the absurd allegation or pipe dream that our economic growth will be greater than any of the other economies' growth in Western Europe.

So when we talk of electricity or

water, no one talks of energy conservation. There is of course an abundance of talk about wind farms out at sea in the deep blue. But like economic growth, it is very much pie in the sky.

None of the economists that usually stand to be counted and speak their mind seem to have a word about this. There is no one who has the gall to raise a middle finger to the two gentlemen and tell them

their fiscal policies are mad.

The exceptions being Karm Farrugia and Lino Spiteri, who have had no problem spelling out the message that you cannot bend over backwards and expect to walk at the same time. Ironically, both these two economists find their roots in old Labour.

The other economists have obviously forgotten all about their lectures which carry the theme issue: there is no such thing as a free lunch.

Which of course brings us to the taxation issue and the taxes we should be paying as a basic requirement. This is not Lichtenstein, but Malta. Here again, both parties are promising cuts and more cuts. It is economic madness to derail fiscal common sense for the sole purpose of getting voters to vote for you. To attract niche voters, both parties have offered their voters unbelievably juicy super-sized carrots.

Labour wants to give back the public holidays that fall on weekends and the Nationalists wish for more cuts in tax for high-income earners. In a country which still has a serious problem with work ethic and which needs to focus on productivity, and in a nation which is intrinsically adverse to paying the State, such proposals are reckless and foolish.

Like the ridiculous French socialist suggestion that was implemented years back, that introduced the 35-hour week, measures that cut back on essential revenue for government will have to be reverted.

When the politicians return to their Cabinet meetings and daily decisions they will have to face stark realities. Those realities include making ends meet. Then they will climb down from



Who said that we have no left wing in Malta? We have two socialist parties living on the moon.

their electoral platforms, gobble up some humble pie and face the bleak reality of administering a budget.

With a pension bomb round the corner, with a health bill that continues to grow exponentially, with education costs spiralling and with the infrastructure of the country calling out for more investment, and more significantly, with the plethora of national projects in around the Grand Harbour, either both parties think this country has infinite gold reserves, or else they have made a pact with Osama Bin Laden to implode our economy.

Neither of the parties have the gall to say things as they are. Ask the PN about subsidies to the dockyards, and they waffle. Ask the MLP about the precise implications of the 50% surcharge cut for individuals who already paying no surcharge, and you get strange looks.

Falzon and surveys

You have to hand it to him: Michael Falzon, hunter, banker and fireworks enthusiast, is a fine rabble-rouser. I could of course mention some historical rabble rousers in mass meetings such as the one on the Fossos.

Once again, I have to compliment Falzon for questioning one important exercise undertaken by the independent media: surveys. He told the crowd to ignore the surveys. Do so, and be warned. Surveys, dear Michael, are not

the Gospel but they serve as an indicator of public sentiment and trends.

Once again, Falzon in his rhetoric and hysteria has eaten away at a basic tenet in the reporting of the democratic process. I shudder to think how he would treat criticism from the free press if ever elected to be part of the government Cabinet. Imagine Hillary Clinton standing in front of a crowd and rubbishing a media survey. It is an unthinkable scenario.

But then how can I compare Hillary to Michael F?

By the way, I never knew he was such a bad singer. Don't give up the day job, Michael.

Libels

The plethora of libels flying from one side to another confirm to what extent the two parties are willing to abuse the press laws that they themselves have used to control the frequency of verbal abuse. It proves beyond doubt the need to revisit the libel laws which put unnecessary pressure on the courts when the courts should be using their time for more urgent issues.

Josie and Gandhi

There is something chronically wrong with Josie's examples. He quotes Gandhi to hit out at pea-brained journalists. I am sure Gandhi, in whatever reincarnation he manifests himself in today, would love to hear what Josie stands for.

I am not quite too sure Josie remembers what Gandhi stood for. The Mahatma's early years in apartheid South Africa, his frugal lifestyle, his pacifist and non-violent politics, and his aversion to profit makes him an unlikely role model to Josie et al.

If no one can turn to Josie and tell him that everyone is laughing at his example, then I will do him a favour and ask him to read through some history books. No, not the life history of his candidates and their brushes with the law.

More about the real life of Mahatma Gandhi. Perhaps then he could think of another role model when he talks to a carnivorous grouping of big game hunters. I could suggest a few role models: he could start with Lord Haw Haw and then, when he runs out of ideas, I will come up with some other names – one to match the black attire he chose last Sunday when he addressed a motley crowd of deprived hunters and trappers!



maltatoday Editorial

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Tackling corruption

THE Labour party, as evidenced by its billboards, is making allegations of corruption the major plank of its election campaign.

As in previous campaigns, accusations are being hurled around with reputations tarnished as a result. But the issue of corruption needs to be tackled calmly. Corruption needs to be defined and certainly not confused with bad judgement, unethical behaviour or conflict of interest.

While totally committed to fighting and exposing corruption, this newspaper feels that politicians should be wary of loosely alleging corruption unless they have concrete evidence to back up their claims. Equally, we feel that the ease with which politicians resort to filing libel suits needs to be revisited. Essentially, this should be an action of very last resort. The blanket accusation that all the Cabinet is corrupt as evidenced in the Labour party billboard does nothing but tarnish a whole political class and only serves to disengage citizens further from politics. The same would go for a recent allegation by a Nationalist minister in Alfred Sant's regard.

Such claims debase the political currency and reflect badly on the person accusing without evidence. The only

scope of such allegations is the intention to tar reputations. This cannot go unnoticed. While accepting that there have been cases of unethical behaviour, bad judgment, political carelessness – exposed even in our newspaper – we are against such blanket accusations.

And we are equally uncomfortable with the political class which is clearly unused to probing by non-affiliated media, attempting to pigeonhole our newspaper. We are proud of our independence and remain determined to uncover abuse from whatever quarter it derives from.

A case in point is Alfred Sant's accusation that the private company Where's Everybody? was given the MTV contract by Francis Zammit Dimech as a kickback for the TV production company to finance his election campaign. The minister filed legal proceedings rebutting this serious accusation immediately. Alfred Sant's allegation is just a cruel attempt to tarnish reputations.

We agree the fight against corruption is vital to the healthy development of democracy but the way the Labour leader is tackling this issue leaves us sceptical of his intentions. He cannot fight corruption by first anchoring to a policy of zero-tolerance while giving a platform to a former Nationalist activist whose

reasons for taking on government may or may not be related to investigations into alleged corruption concerning his brother.

The way to fight corruption is to strengthen the tools and the mechanisms in place. The Permanent Commission Against Corruption needs to be strengthened, allowing it on its own initiative to investigate allegations of corruption by beefing up its investigative powers. It should be chaired by a person commanding a two-thirds parliamentary approval with security of tenure, executive powers and a proper budget. The proceedings should also be held in an open court.

Declarations of assets and interests should no longer be limited to members of parliament but should be extended to members of the judiciary, chairmen and directors of government boards and entities. Prior to appointment all persons appointed should appear before a parliamentary committee and grilled persons, allowing potential conflicts to be exposed.

A Freedom of Information Act should be enacted allowing all government files and papers to be open to public scrutiny. This will allow journalists to probe documents, which all too often are unnecessarily kept under a cloud of

secrecy. The transparency involved will serve as a deterrent for abuses. Government has published a white paper on a Freedom of Information Act which the next government should legalise with immediate effect.

There should be even more transparency in the granting of government contracts with stringent rules to control frivolous appeals, on sub-contracting and on cost overruns. In all political appointments in ministerial secretariats, strict rules need to be adhered delineating the relationship between the secretariat and the civil service, blood relationships, made known, to ensure the absence of nepotism and a declaration of interests of appointees.

Regrettably none of this upgrading of standards is mentioned in the recently published electoral manifestos. If corruption is to be exposed and censured, its elimination must be dealt with in a serious manner meaning that politicians must propose the strengthening of the structures which already exist and not simply alleging corruption without producing a shed of evidence with the sole intention of tarnishing reputations.

Our democracy depends also on our capacity to fight corruption and not just alleging its existence without supplying proof.

ELECTION SPECIAL
maltatoday

ON SALE TOMORROW - DON'T MISS OUT

Pullicino denies allegations by Jo Said on kickbacks

MATTHEW VELLA

ENVIRONMENT Minister George Pullicino yesterday denied allegations by former PN activist Jo Said that Nationalist MP David Agius had discussed two corruption cases with him, implicating Pullicino and parliamentary secretary Tony Abela.

Said's police affidavit, published yesterday in It-Torca, claims that David Agius met him in an Attard café and told him that Pullicino had asked for money in return for Cabinet's approval of a permit; while Abela had also facilitated some form of Cabinet approval, the affidavit reads.

Police are now investigating Said after David Agius made a formal complaint that he was being blackmailed. It is being alleged that Said tried to force Agius to stand up in Parliament, declare the Nationalist Government as corrupt and cross the floor.

Agius claimed Said had been threatening him if he didn't cross the floor, or he would disclose an incident as a university student, when the uni-



Environment Minister George Pullicino (left) has denied kickback claims from former PN activist Jo Said



versity board annulled an exam taken by Agius for taking a ruler with an economic graph with him inside the examination room.

The irregularity meant that Agius had to graduate a year later than his colleagues.

Minister George Pullicino denied Said's allegations,

which he said were intended to tarnish his reputation. He said he would open legal procedures against Said and It-Torca, which carried the po-

lice affidavit word for word. Pullicino has already opened legal procedures against Said over comments he gave to Smash TV.

PN hits out at Sant's 'rumours' on plans to close Junior College

THE Nationalist Party yesterday said that Alfred Sant had fabricated claims that government intended to close down the Junior College Sixth Form and remove the Junior College examinations.

In a statement, the PN said

Alfred Sant and the Labour Party were spreading rumours, "one after the other, every day" to cover up "his fiasco", with reference to Labour's pledge to introduce a reception class for kindergarten students before they are admitted to primary

education. The PN claims the proposal is tantamount to a repeater class.

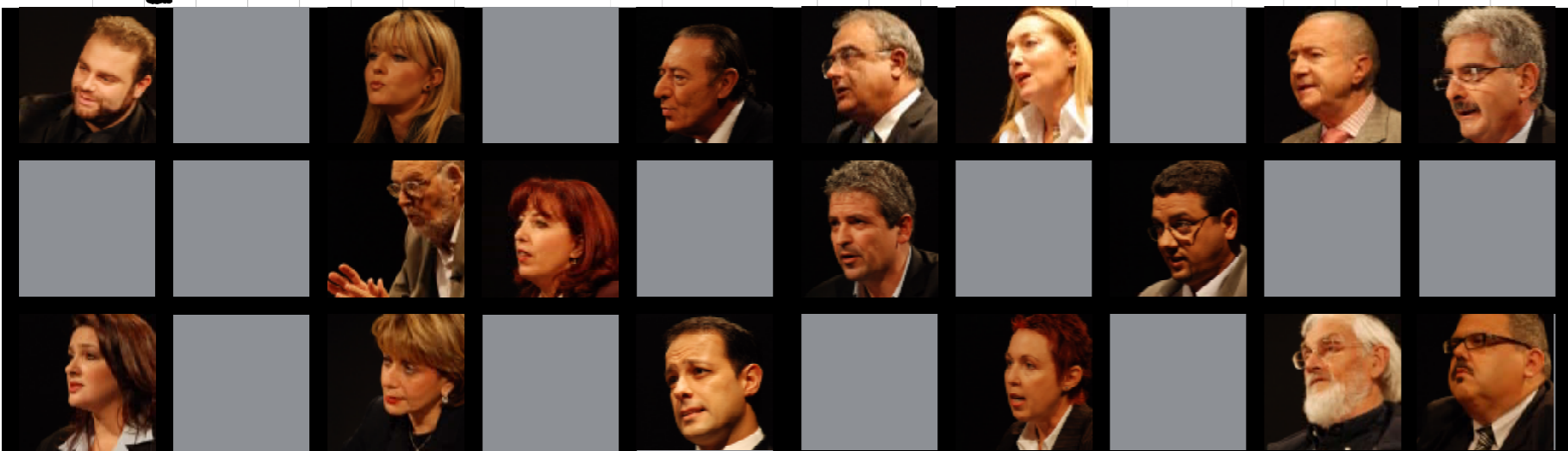
"First Sant invents that the government is going to close down the Junior Lyceums; then he invents that the MATSEC resits are to take place later than usu-

al. These have been denied but Sant just repeats these claims in the hope that they are believed. Today he invented that government would close down the Junior College and remove the Junior College examinations."

The PN said it would be no surprise if in the coming days Sant would invent that government "was about to close down MCAST or University".

"It looks like there's no limit to what Sant and Labour are ready to invent," the statement concluded.

Reporter. Now also on Youtube



www.youtube.com/ReporterMediaToday

Dive in now. www.maltatoday.com.mt daily

Football

Woodgate wins cup for Spurs

JONATHAN Woodgate's headed goal in extra-time gave Spurs a 2-1 victory over holders Chelsea in the Carling Cup final.

Spurs made the brighter start to the showpiece but wasted a host of chances before Didier Drogba, who sent a 25-yard free-kick narrowly wide on 33 minutes, made no mistake six minutes later, steering an effort around the wall to leave Paul Robinson flat-footed.

Drogba's goal saw him become the first player to score in three League Cup finals - but Spurs drew level on 70 minutes when the linesman spotted a handball by Wayne Bridge in the 18-yard box.

Referee Mark Halsey pointed to the spot, and Dimitar Berbatov kept his cool to slide the spot-kick home.

The goal sparked a concerted push for a winner by Juande Ramos' troops - but the Blues held firm to force an extra 30 minutes.

Spurs kept their momentum going in the extra period and took the lead on 94 minutes, when Jermaine Jenas floated a free-kick into the Chelsea box. Woodgate glanced the ball onto Cech's gloves and it rebounded off the Spurs defender's face and into the net.

Robinson then pulled off good saves to deny Salomon Kalou and



Jonathan Woodgate of Tottenham Hotspur celebrates with his man of the match trophy after winning the Carling Cup Final against Chelsea

Joe Cole in the dying stages and secure glory for Ramos' heroes.

Tottenham striker Robbie Keane described the outcome as a "dream come true".

He said "Hopefully this is start of something special, hopefully we can kick on now. It's special for the fans.

"This was a massive test for us and it's unbelievable and a dream come true to come out as winners. I dreamt of this moment as kid and I'm speechless."

Matchwinner Woodgate said: "I don't really go up for corners but I took a chance and was able to get my head on it and luckily it went in."

"I think we were the best team and hopefully we can push on

from this next year. Chelsea are a top side and they showed that today but we did it."

Ramos was "happy because the people (fans) are very happy" while captain Ledley King hailed the "spirit" of his side.

Chelsea boss Avram Grant felt his side were unlucky to lose the match but called on his players to regain focus for the challenges ahead.

He said: "I think even in the second half Tottenham were not in the game and that we were the better side."

"The penalty put them back in the game and that turned the match. The second goal was from a set-piece so we are disappointed.

Juve's open letter to FA: 'Enough!'

JUVENTUS have written an open letter to the FIGC and Referees' Association demanding action to stop the club being "made to pay" for Calciopoli.

The Bianconeri were furious after last night's 2-1 defeat at Reggina, in which there were two clear penalties not awarded before a stoppage-time spot-kick gave the Amaro the win.

Now they have taken further action by writing an open letter to the Federation and the AIA - Referees' Association - signed by President Giovanni Cobolli Gigli and general manager Jean-Claude Blanc.

"The repetition of such serious errors forces us to ask for the intervention of the Federation to guarantee the regularity of this campaign, protecting the work and professionalism of the players, Coach and directors of Juventus."

One of the theories put forward openly in this letter is that referees are giving decisions against Juve to continue 'punishing' them for the Calciopoli scandal.

This was the first time this

season that referee Paolo Dondarini had been assigned to officiate a Juventus match, as he was one of the figures accused - and cleared - in the trial last year.

"Some decisions by the referees are confirming the doubts raised by more than a few people - that there is not a relaxed and adequate approach towards Juventus considering the serious and professional way the club and team are behaving."

"What is certain is that Juventus cannot keep paying for something they have already paid an extremely severe price."

"The club is lifting itself back up from that thanks to the passion of its fans, who legitimately ask for respect."

The Bianconeri were demoted to Serie B and stripped of two Scudetto titles in the Calciopoli scandal.

Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that Cristiano Zanetti is handed a two-match ban for his dismissal against Reggina.

The midfielder saw red in stoppages for kicking out at Nicola Amoroso.

Pursuits

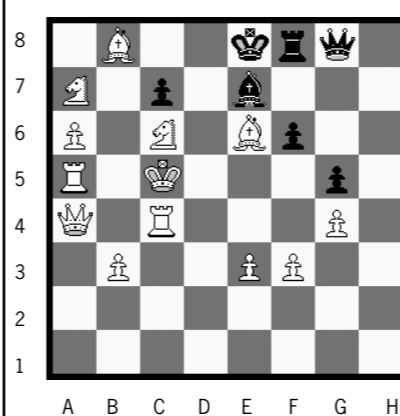
			4					
1	6	8	9		7		2	
4			1	6	3	9		
	1	5			2	6		
7		8			2		9	
3		7		6	5			
	8	9	2	3			6	7
		1		8				
	3				1	9		8

Sudoku

Solution to be published tomorrow

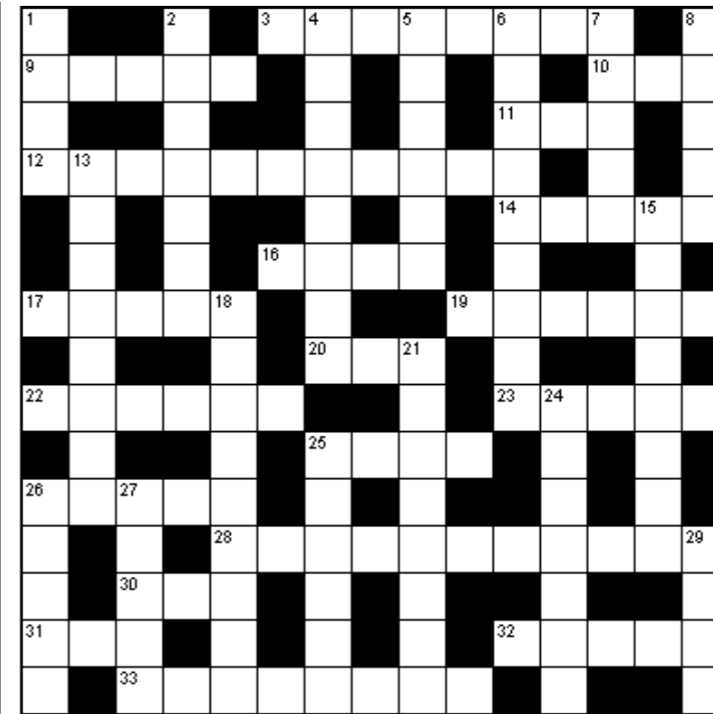
Sudoku rules are extremely easy: Fill all empty squares so that the numbers 1 to 9 appear once in each row, column and 9x9 box.

Chess



White to play and mate in two moves

Solution to be published tomorrow



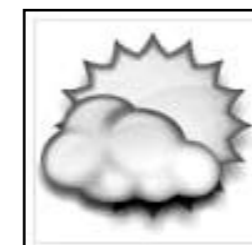
Across

- 3. Communicating corridors (8)
- 9. Harass (5)
- 10. Electrically charged atom (3)
- 11. Toward the stern (3)
- 12. Woman who herds sheep (11)
- 14. Resembling suds (5)
- 16. Club-like weapon (4)
- 17. Past tense of stand (5)
- 19. Gibberish (6)
- 20. Belonging to him (3)
- 22. Little job (6)
- 23. Planet (5)
- 25. Ruffian (4)
- 26. Wash (5)
- 28. Tenant under a lease (11)
- 30. 21st letter of the Greek alphabet (3)
- 31. Period of human life (3)
- 32. Tugs (5)
- 33. Direct light of the sun (8)

Down

- 1. Sailors (4)
- 2. Underwater missile (7)
- 4. To come nearer to (8)
- 5. Plot (6)
- 6. Articles of glass (9)
- 7. Located (5)
- 8. Take pleasure in (5)
- 13. Emotional outburst (8)
- 15. Deficiency in quantity (8)
- 18. Weed plant (9)
- 21. Cooking pan (8)
- 24. Clap (7)
- 25. Roof covering (6)
- 26. Sheep cry (5)
- 27. Ribbons (5)
- 29. Coarse file (4)

Today's Weather



MOSTLY CLOUDY
18 °C / 11 °C
UV INDEX: 4

WARNINGS: Nil

WEATHER: Fine becoming partly cloudy

VISIBILITY: Good

WIND: Light mainly Westerly (force 2 to 3)

SEA: Generally slight

SWELL: Negligible

Solution to be published tomorrow

Think.

Alfred Sant isn't talking about unemployment. That's because he doesn't need to. He has no grounds for doing so. Unemployment has dropped to an all-time low. Malta is nearing full employment. This government has generated 20,000 jobs in the last four years. It has created the right climate for billions of euros in foreign direct investment. New sectors have opened up and flourished. Malta is doing well.

In this campaign, Sant's Labour Party are bereft of any real problems to talk about. That's why they're floundering, talking about the different DNA of those who don't share their political sympathies, and making frenzied attacks on university students.

To find unemployment and economic problems to talk about, Alfred Sant is going to

have to create them himself. He has proved himself to be very good at that already. Immediately he first walked up the steps of Castille as prime minister, he set in train a series of actions with catastrophic knock-on effects for the economy and society. Unemployment soared, the number of self-employed persons fell drastically, and foreign direct investment plummeted. Malta slid into recession. Sant defends those 22 months of power by saying he didn't have enough time to work on his plans.

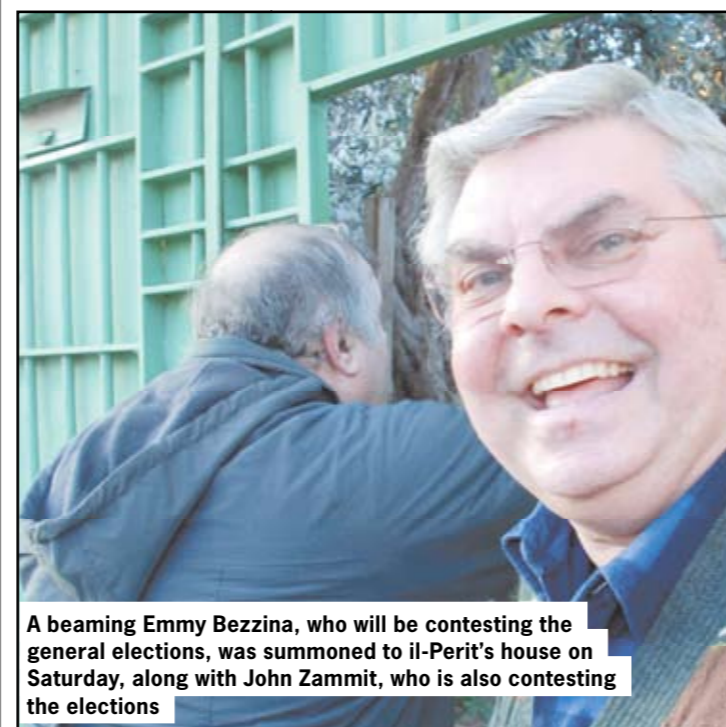
We say thank heavens for that. If he wreaked so much havoc in two years, he would have brought Malta to its knees in five.

When people talk about change, that's not the kind of change they want. But it's the kind of change they'll get from Labour.

Think about it.
Better safe than sorry.

iva, flimkien kollox possibbli
gonzipn

Mintoff summons Emmy Bezzina and John Zammit



A beaming Emmy Bezzina, who will be contesting the general elections, was summoned to il-Perit's house on Saturday, along with John Zammit, who is also contesting the elections

JAMES DEBONO

THE man who once provoked the ire of the superpowers by delaying the end of the Helsinki Conference on security and co-operation in Europe by over 50 days, is now busy assembling the lunatic fringe of Maltese politics in his Tarxien villa.

Alpha Party leader Emmy Bezzina, who is contesting the general election as an independent candidate, and Liberal Democratic Alliance leader John Zammit were summoned on Saturday by the 94-year-old Duminku Mintoff at his house in Tarxien for an important meeting.

The frail former Premier was seen opening his door to the two self-appointed party leaders.

"We were called for this meeting by Mintoff... God only knows what he has in mind... I hope he does not give me a lot of work to do. He already asked me to mediate between North and South Korea," Zammit told MaltaToday.

Zammit explained that this was not the first meeting with Mintoff.

"He had asked me not to contest the second district on behalf of the Liberal Democratic Alliance as he was contesting himself."

Zammit is still baffled by Mintoff's failure to present his nomination.



"We already had already prepared a very big flag of our party and we had already informed the European Liberals that we were contesting."

Zammit, a former comrade-in-arms of Emmy Bezzina, had split from the Alpha Party which he co-founded to set up his own Liberal Democratic Party.

Bezzina claimed that he had no idea why Mintoff was calling the meeting.

"I received a message and I want to verify it..." Bezzina replied as the gate opened and Mintoff welcomed the two guests.

Bezzina will be addressing a meeting along extreme right candidates Norman Lowell next Friday.

Motorcyclist crashes into four cars

A 39-year-old motorcyclist from Santa Lucija yesterday crashed his motorbike into a VW Polo at Kennedy Grove in an incident which involved three other cars.

The motorcyclist suffered fractures in the incident in which he lost control of motorbike, which crashed into four cars.

The incident happened at

around 11:45am.

The police said the motorcyclist lost control of his bike, crashed into a VW Polo coming from the opposite direction and then hit a BMW, a Toyota Celica and a Skoda.

The man has been treated for broken bones and been kept at Mater Dei Hospital for observation.