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MALTA'S INDEPENDENT VOICE

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The hour that could have swayed the tide

Michael Falzon requested voting extension, Micallef reveals

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KARL SCHEMBRI

LABOUR secretary-general Jason Micallef confirmed to MaltaToday the decision to request an extra hour of voting on Saturday 8 March, extending voting hours to 11pm, was the brainchild of deputy leader Michael Falzon.

In an interview, Micallef names Falzon and MLP electoral office chief Louis Gatt as the men behind the strange decision that was at first credited to the PN, given the record low turnout from Nationalist districts.

"The request came from the people of our electoral wing, for a one-hour extension," Micallef says, adding he never interfered in issues related to



Jason Micallef - the secretary-general says Michael Falzon (right) requested extending the voting times



the electoral process. "Michael Falzon and Louis Gatt are the experts on these matters."

Micallef says the decision was prompted by long queues in Bormla, I-Isla and Zejtun but when asked if

he was aware this could have cost the election, Micallef stops short of defending the request.

"I don't know. I can't confirm that as yet. I haven't gone that far into the analysis. I know a lot of people got worried when they heard about this. However, if you have experts on the electoral process, you have to take their word. The party took their word."

In an interview appearing also today on sister paper Illum, PN secretary-general Joe Saliba also confirmed the request for the one-hour extension came from Labour. "We immediately said yes," Saliba said.

According to yesterday's In-Naz-zjon, people close to Alfred Sant were blaming Falzon for Labour's defeat.

Pullicino Orlando contract reached Labour too late

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The Nationalist MP, seen here at Mistra on 1 March, where he denied any knowledge of the project to build a disco on his land in Mistra. The contract confirming his approval of the project arrived in Labour's hands too late in the day to leave an effect on the election campaign

Evarist Bartolo calls for deputy leaders' resignation

LABOUR MP Evarist Bartolo today calls on the two deputy leaders to resign and follow Alfred Sant's footsteps in the wake of their party's defeat at the elections.

In his Sunday column on this newspaper, Bartolo writes the party needs "new ideas and new people" to be able to face the electorate and win its support. He urges deputy leader for parliamentary affairs Charles Mangion and deputy for party affairs Michael Falzon to resign and give space to others.

"We need new ideas and new people in our fold. Dr Alfred Sant did the right thing by resigning, his two deputy leaders must do like him to be replaced."



Evarist Bartolo

Meanwhile Bartolo somehow also stands out in contrast with secretary-general Jason Micallef's stand on Xarabank last Friday when he

was asked about the possibility of extending the leadership vote to all party members rather than just the delegates.

"We have to become an open and broad party in touch with a wider spectrum of our society," Bartolo said. "We must go back to the country and engage

in a wide and deep conversation with the people of all ages and from all walks of life if we want to grow beyond being the voice of less than half of our population."

Where do we go now? Page 18



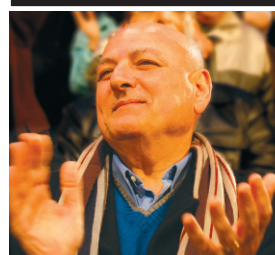
The Gonzi super Cabinet

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Vacancy: Electable leader for Labour

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THE RISE AND FALL OF A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT

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Labour obtains absolute majority in council elections page 5

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