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NEWSMater Dei's first casualties:
Nurses *See page 4* ▶**FOOTBALL**Hamrun Spartans in FA semi-final for first time since '95
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HUNT FOR THE AGITATOR 'We'll raze Malta to the ground'

CHARLOT ZAHRA
DAVID DARMANIN

FOUR people are under police arrest in connection with the circulation of an inflammatory SMS among the hunting community, which incited hunters to take part a protest at Ta' Qali today at 10am, and to "raze the country to the ground".

The text message published by the police during an urgent press conference yesterday, read as follows: "A huge arcade and a spectacular protest on Sunday at 10.00, the hunting season has arrived and we cannot go out, our tempers are flaring up and

we will raze this country to the ground. Bring with you iron bars, wooden bars, stones, knives, petrol and matches. Send this message to other hunters you know don't cry about sending a 5c message. Let's all meet at Ta' Qali at 10."

Addressing the media, Assistant Police Commissioner Josie Brincat said that the persons were arrested on Friday and are expected to be arraigned in Court in the next few days for incitement to violence.

"Such SMSes are illegal and the police are duty bound by the law to investigate them. We have no intention of tolerating this kind of messages whatsoever," he in-



Assistant Commissioner Josie Brincat (centre): we will prosecute anyone who turns up for tomorrow's illegal meeting

sisted.

If found guilty, the four persons, about whom the police gave no further details, could face a prison term as well as a fine.

He said that nobody had applied

for a permit to hold a protest at Ta' Qali today. "Those who gather at Ta' Qali (Sunday) morning at 10 am will be liable for prosecution for illegal assembly,"

Brincat warned.

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Farcical spring cleaning at MEPA before Gonzi's visit

JAMES DEBONO

ON the eve of the Prime Minister's uplifting address to MEPA's demoralised employees in the foyer, workers were busy setting the house in order for the Dr Gonzi's first visit since taking over the beleaguered institution from former Minister George Pullicino.

As from Tuesday morning a number of foreign workers were seen cleaning windows and doors. Other workers were busy painting the corridors and rooms which were visited by the PM on the next day. Landscaping works were undertaken on a patch of soil next to MEPA's entrance, and a number of palm trees were planted, among other vegetation.

On Wednesday morning the corridors were adorned with frames and pictures. A number of banners depicting MEPA's various conservation initiatives were also displayed in the foyer.

The most striking poster was very apt, for it depicted a blood transfusion with the caption "New Blood" – a motto fitting the occasion.

Employees were told not to park their cars in their usual car park, so as not to occupy this open space. The PM's public relations officer was also seen roaming around MEPA hours before Lawrence Gonzi's entry.

Upon arrival, journalists were given a press pack which included

the PM's draft code of ethics, as well as information on MEPA's noble work to protect the Pinna nobilis – the largest mollusc in the Mediterranean Sea – and the Discoglossus pictus pictus: the Maltese painted frog.

During the visit, journalists assisted to MEPA's top brass giving the Prime Minister an orientation tour in which he was shown what one official described as "a sample" of MEPA's hard work.

In one of the offices the PM was given a graphic display of how MEPA processed and amended

plans for the Golden Sands Hotel, with the Prime Minister describing the whole process as "worthwhile." Surely a presentation on the evolving mass of blocks at Tigne' would have been more thought-provoking.

The PM rightly commended MEPA's website, nodding at the announcement that plans will soon be made available to architects.

Pity the general public still has to pay to see case officer reports, though.

In his address to the employees the Prime Minister heralded a new era of transparency and openness in the beleaguered institution. Minutes later his PRO announced that no questions were allowed and that journalists should send any queries by email.

MEPA farce - pages 10-11 ▶



MAVERICK Italian celebrity actor Roberto Benigni will be taking Malta by storm next week when he comes to get his honorary doctorate from University and perform pieces from Dante's La Divina Com-

Benigni: To hell with officialdom

media. And just like Dante, he is relegating officialdom to the circles of hell as his agent has made it clear there will be no time for official appointments, from the President downwards.

The news came a bit like a cold shower for politicians and other opportunists waiting to get their 15 seconds of fame, appearing next to the Oscar winning actor and director in the photos and video clips.

Yet the idea to grant the honorary doctorate to Benig-

ni has meant that Malta will be getting its serata Dantesca for free as opposed to the sky high fees usually charged for his performances.

As for the disappointed public figures, Benigni has overlooked them much like Dante's Virgilio himself dismissed the ignavi – those cowards not even worthy of entering hell: "Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa" ("Don't pay them any mind, just look and walk on").

See full story on page 7 ▶

Malta's finest.

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**New vision
for television**

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**MT SURVEY
Thumbs up
for Gonzi's
Cabinet**

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**INTERVIEW
JEAN PIERRE
FARRUGIA**

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