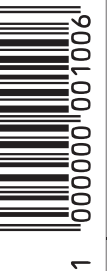


Invasion of the naked body scanners **pg 9** ▶

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## DIVORCE BILL DOOMED

### What God has joined together, not even Joseph Muscat can put asunder



IF Labour leader Joseph Muscat presents a private member's bill to introduce divorce and allows his MPs a free vote, the motion will almost certainly be shot down by the current parliamentary set-up.

This emerges from an in-house survey conducted by MaltaToday among members of the House of Representatives yesterday, in the light of Muscat's proposal to initiate a parliamentary debate on

an issue which has traditionally set Church and State on a collision course.

The Malta Labour Party appears to be divided on this particular issue, with a small number of committed anti-divorce MPs, as well as a large swathe of undecided or non-committal parliamentarians.

There were six Labour respondents who claimed that they would vote against divorce legislation, and al-

though outnumbered by pro-divorce MPs in the same party (13), the MLP's "No vote" would certainly be enough to doom any divorce bill to failure, unless there is a radical shake-up on the Labour benches after the next election.

As for the government MPs nearly all opted to reserve judgement on an issue which has for decades been fiercely resisted by the Christian Democrat ruling party. Six

Nationalist MPs declared their outright opposition to the bill, and none came out officially in favour. But it is debatable whether their party will allow them the luxury of a free vote to begin with: a fact which, added to the clear division within Labour ranks, strongly suggests that the bill proposed by Labour leader Joseph Muscat will not garner majority backing in the House.

Recent surveys suggest

that popular opposition to divorce is dwindling among younger generations, and MaltaToday's Sunday survey also revealed that the proposal enjoys more backing among Labour voters (58.3%) than Nationalist (34.2%).

The same survey revealed that although a slim majority (50.2%) opposes divorce on a national level, 60% expect divorce to be introduced within the next 10 years.

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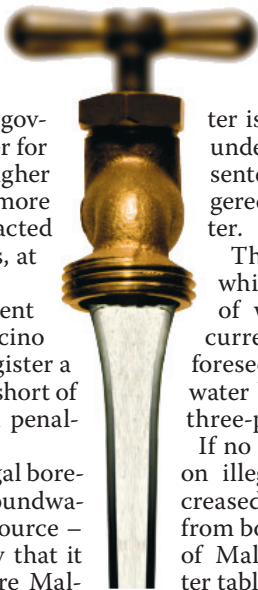
## Water price hike could spell disaster for our water table

JAMES DEBONO

THE shock hike in water tariffs being proposed by government could spell disaster for Malta's water table, as higher utility bills might tempt more people to buy illegally-extracted water, delivered by bowsers, at very cheap prices.

Yesterday's announcement by Minister George Pullicino that anyone who fails to register a borehole will be fined falls short of introducing charges which penalise bore hole extraction.

Water extracted from illegal boreholes – literally stealing groundwater from its underground source – is done so indiscriminately that it risks endangering the entire Mal-



ttese water table.

When groundwater is extracted without control, more sea water is allowed to seep in the underwater source: a death sentence for Malta's endangered reserve of cheap water.

The new tariff regime which reflects the real cost of water, rather than the current subsidised rates, foresees a 76% increase in the water bill paid by the average three-person household.

If no clampdown takes place on illegal extraction, the increased demand for water from bowsers can spell the end of Malta's water table.

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## WWF accuses Italy of laundering tuna through Malta

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

MALTA'S alleged role in an international bluefin tuna racket was yesterday highlighted once more by the World Wildlife Fund, in a report which accuses Italy of overshooting its total allocated catch by as much as 38%.

According to WWF, over 800 tonnes of this excess catch would have been in-putted to Maltese cages by Italian vessels this year. The bluefin tuna is a critically endangered species, believed to be on the verge of total stocks collapse in the Mediterranean. It can



fetch up to €20 a kilo on the Japanese market.

Entitled 'Lifting the lid on Italy's bluefin tuna industry', the WWF report reveals that the Italian bluefin tuna fishing fleet is almost double its officially reported size of 185 vessels, and that illegal spotter planes regularly fly from a number of Mediterranean airports, including Malta.

The report was compiled by consultancy firm ATRI/SL, and presented yesterday to both the Italian government and the European Commissioner for Fisheries, Dr Joe Borg.

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