



# 59%

**reject both PN and MLP on immigration**

**11% think AN has best policy on immigration**

**49% of those supporting AN's immigration policy refuse to divulge voting intentions**

**RACISM TREMORS - page 4**

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**SANT: FILLING TOURISM HOLES WITH GOLF COURSES** pg 10 >

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# On the record

James Debono digs into the archives to find what candidates have been saying on a variety of issues over the years



**PIPPO PSAILA**  
PN candidate on 9th and 10th district

*On divorce*  
"I am completely against divorce... This is not a question of rights but a question of faith and religion. I am not a purist. But there is phrase which says: 'what God has joined together let no man put asunder'. Marriage is an indissoluble bond. I do not expect everyone to agree with me but these are my values."  
October 21 2007 – MaltaToday

*On whether 20 years in government are enough*  
"Is a marriage dissolved after 20 years simply because the spouses get used to each other?"  
October 21 2007 – MaltaToday

*On cohabiting couples*  
"This is a very tricky situation. I think that the church's position is clear and the party has to follow this position."  
October 21 2007 – MaltaToday

*Pippo's economics*  
"The role of the state in the economy should not simply that of controlling the money supply to keep inflation down. It should also cut taxes and incentivise economic wealth creators: the business class. If one cuts taxes to increase consumer spending, the economy will grow."  
October 21 2007-MaltaToday



**MARLENE PULLICINO**  
MLP candidate 5th and 7th districts

*On divorce*  
"I disagree with divorce in the same way as I



**MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO-PRECA**  
MLP candidate on 6th district

disagree with abortion... We do not solve anything by introducing divorce. For those who have a valid reason there are annulments."  
November 4 2007 – Illum

*On fireworks*  
"The only way to stop accidents is to train those who work in fireworks factories. You cannot close fireworks factories to avoid accidents. This is the same as banning driving to avoid traffic accidents."  
November 4 2007 – Illum

*On the General Workers' Union*  
"I don't agree with the abrupt way intelligent people like Josephine Attard Sultana and Manwel Micallef were treated. We need to tap into the intelligence of everyone to move forward. We have to compete with other countries and we need everybody's talent... I am not impressed by those advocating militancy. I am only convinced by those practising absolute democracy and transparency."  
September 10 2006 – MaltaToday

*On Partnership winning the referendum*  
"I don't think that Partnership had won. Yet at that time it was a question of interpreting the result. What is important for me is that Alfred Sant has honoured his pledge to respect the verdict of the people expressed in the general elections."  
September 10 2006 – MaltaToday

*On sponsoring band clubs with Marlene id-Dentista T-shirts*  
"I feel obliged to help them. While I get paid for my work, these youths work without getting any financial reward in return. What I am not giving in voluntary work, I am now giving in financial support."  
September 10 2006 – MaltaToday



**MICHAEL FREND**  
PN candidate on 9th and 10th district

*On divorce*  
"When one talks of divorce in this country there is a strong sense of bigotry... A fervent Catholic believer should not be tempted by divorce similar to a diabetic who cannot eat sweets. It depends wholly on the person's free will whether to succumb to the 'temptation' or not."  
January 9 2005 – MaltaToday

*On gay marriages*  
"On a personal level I do not agree with gay marriages. I believe a marriage is a contract between a man and a woman. But if a gay person is living with his partner under the same roof I do agree that their civil rights should be protected by law. If they bought a house together and one of the partners dies, the living spouse cannot simply lose all the rights on the house. These situations have to be regulated by law so that nobody suffers undesirable consequences."  
January 9 2005-MaltaToday

*On cohabitation*  
"We need to safeguard the rights of individuals. Irrespective of whether one agrees or not with these issues they are a visible reality. Just like there are failed marriages, there are also co-habiting



**PATRICK ATTARD**  
AD candidate 5th and 12th district

*On unemployment benefits*  
"The difference between the unemployment benefit and the minimum wage amounts to a couple of liri. If someone is offered a job at minimum wage, it only takes a couple of simple calculations to realise that with the additional transport costs to travel to work the person would only be earning some Lm2 more than the unemployment benefit. There is no incentive to motivate the unemployed to enter the job market, especially those who would have been unemployed for a number of years."  
January 9 2005 – MaltaToday



**KARL SCHEMBRI**

*On immigration*  
"We should give full legal protection to people who are refugees or who have humanitarian status. But as regards economic migrants we should not accept illegality."  
May 6 2007 – MaltaToday

*On state and church*  
"We should remain the party of reconciling views and consensus... Even when we emphasized Christian Democracy we were not confessional, as we are a political party and not part of the Church. We are a political party in constant evolution."  
May 6 2007 – MaltaToday

*On reducing electricity bills*  
"As an engineer am well aware that 40% of energy is wasted to heat water... Let's introduce an incentive through which the government gives everyone a solar heater panel. People would pay, say, €25 a month until they pay it back."  
February 10 2008 – Illum



**ASTRID VELLA**

*On entrenching abortion ban in the Constitution*  
"I am very strongly against abortion, I find it abhorrent, I find it very difficult how people can accept it on a moral plain, but I don't think this Constitutional amendment is on the cards."  
December 2 2007 – MaltaToday

*On the PN's vision for Malta*  
"Transforming Malta into one of the most successful small states in the world. Not just a centre for excellence, but also ensuring that Malta remains one of the safest countries in Europe where people can walk home peacefully. It's the quality of life, not just the standard of living."  
May 6 2007 – MaltaToday



**ASTRID VELLA**

*On being Malta's first openly gay candidate*  
"I would like my country to evolve to the point where I would not even have to declare that I am gay."  
February 10 2008 – Illum

*On reducing electricity bills*  
"As an engineer am well aware that 40% of energy is wasted to heat water... Let's introduce an incentive through which the government gives everyone a solar heater panel. People would pay, say, €25 a month until they pay it back."  
February 10 2008 – Illum

# Sant lambasts Gonzi for failure to tackle corruption

MATTHEW VELLA

LABOUR leader Alfred Sant yesterday said that Eddie Fenech Adami's maxim that whoever does not fight corruption, was corrupt, could be applied to Lawrence Gonzi, whom he accused of doing little to fight corruption.

He had to defend the presence of former Nationalist activist Michael Woods at the Labour general conference. Woods had declared on One TV that his brother Thomas Woods had not been treated well by the Nationalist government. Thomas Woods was in fact investigated over bribery charges.

"With all due respect, it's the present caretaker prime minister who doesn't seem to deal with cases of corruption which have never been investigated."

Defending Woods's right to express his political views, he said Gonzi had failed to enact a whistleblowers act that could protect people giving evidence. "Certainly this government is not interested in the fight against corruption."

Alternattiva Demokratika candidate Victor Galea, who was brought on the programme later on along with PN candidate Georg Sapiano and Azzjoni Nazzjonali candidate Peter Spiteri Gingell, said the whistleblowers act was not enough in the fight against corruption, but had to be coupled with a freedom of information act and a law on the financing of parties.

Sant said the Nationalist government was hiding behind



smokescreens on corruption. "If you don't give people the protection they need to give evidence, you are using the Commissioner of Police as a smokescreen. The same goes for the Permanent Commission for Corruption. Gonzi has been in power for the last four years and he promised a new style of doing politics. You'd expect a whistleblowers act from that."

On the energy surcharge, Sant stated that this would be halved for all families, while small businesses and self-employed who do not fall under the capping of

the surcharge would receive tax credits. He defended his proposal from claims that he required approval from the Commission, which states that any aid from the State had to generally be notified to Brussels. Sant claimed this was a general rule, but that in particular cases where no big economic impact would be registered, this notification would not be required. Challenged by Georg Sapiano whether the reception class proposal would be imposed on the private school sector by a new

Labour government, Sant said it would not. Sapiano interjected to say this would force all those parents who did not intend to have their children "pay with a year of their life" to spend an extra year in school, to send their kids to private schools, with all the costs that incurred.

Sant defended the reception class proposal, saying Maltese children appear to be more advanced at a younger age than their European counterparts because a lot of subjects are crammed at that age. "When they reach the age of 14, the picture changes, and

it's the Europeans who are more advanced than our children." Sant was also challenged on the cost overruns his government incurred between 1996 and 1998. He said his government was in the process of tightening on overruns in government projects, and then turned onto the Nationalist government's record on cost overruns in the five years since their re-election in 1998.

He was also quizzed on the role of Labour MP and architect Charles Buhagiar in his stewardship of government road projects which had incurred cost overruns. Sant said Buhagiar's role was supervisory and that cost overruns were primarily incurred at the project management stages, which had pushed up supervisory costs at a later stage.

AD candidate Victor Galea also called for voters to consider the feasibility of coalition governments, pointing to the fact that 22 European governments were coalition governments. He said a coalition government was neither Nationalist nor Labour, but a Maltese government.

The AN candidate refused to comment on the criminal and civil cases concerning three candidates, revealed by MaltaToday, saying these cases were still under court consideration. On the case of Pierre Cutajar, who had a string of criminal charges, he said Cutajar was a reformed man who had declared his past with the party.

But he did not comment on the case of the AN candidate who is charged in court along with three other defendants in a money-laundering case of over Lm900,000.

# Major parties duck hunting issue on TVM

Astrid Vella declines invitation as she 'didn't have all manifestoes'

KARL SCHEMBRI

WITH the two major parties meticulously avoiding the spring hunting issue tonight on TVM, one of the leading voices for environment protection will be skirting the debate altogether as its chairperson said she did not have time to read all manifestoes.

Flimkien Ghal Ambjent Ahjar chairperson Astrid Vella turned down an invitation to participate on the national broadcaster's current affairs programme Dissett tonight, claiming she did not have all the parties' manifestoes.

Vella was behind the vociferous opposition to government decisions – from the ODZ ex-



Astrid Vella

the disgruntled voters who hailed mostly from Nationalist strongholds.

Although last week she had at first accepted to participate in tonight's programme that will be dedicated to the environment, Vella later informed presenter Reno Bugeja she was declining the invitation.

"We specified we would only attend if we were given the opportunity to prepare adequately on party manifestoes," Vella told MaltaToday when contacted yesterday. "Since we did not have the manifestoes of all parties we had no option but to decline, otherwise we would have accepted very willingly."

Vella added that as a non-political NGO, her organisation would only speak about the

parties' manifestoes "on the right platform".

"As a non-political group we have to be scrupulously fair to everyone," she added. "So we have to do an in-depth study of the manifestoes before giving our stand. On the other hand we are satisfied that, given the increased awareness of environmental issues, all parties have included environmental measures in their manifestoes."

In tonight's programme, broadcast at 9.45pm, the PN will be once again sidelining its chief voice on the environment, minister George Pullicino. Instead, it will be represented by new candidate Pippo Psaila, the former national football coach who made a name for himself after being

caught plagiarising a series of opinion pieces on sports by an American scholar, which were published under his name on The Malta Independent.

The party representatives were interviewed beforehand, and the interviews will be analysed tonight by a panel of environmental experts including biologist Prof. Victor Axiak and Prof. Alfred Vella from the University's Faculty of Science.

This newspaper is informed that Psaila avoided the issue of spring hunting, as did the Labour representative who will be appearing tonight, Roderick Galdes.

AD will be represented by Carmel Cacopardo while Azzjoni Nazzjonali will be represented by Anglu Xuerb.

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# Racism tremors

Massive alienation on immigration policies

JAMES DEBONO

THE absolute majority of voters do not identify with the immigration policies of either mainstream party, while 11% think that the far right Azzjoni Nazzjonali have the best policies on this issue: policies which include closing the open centres, and withdrawing from Malta's international obligations.

Like other extreme right-wing parties in Europe, AN has exploited popular apprehensions on this issue turning a veritable human tragedy into a political football.

With the other parties largely silent on this issue during the electoral campaign, AN has emerged as the only vocal party on an issue which is evidently of direct concern to the absolute majority.

AN has called for the closure of open centres and has threatened to pull out of Malta's legal international obligations in the absence of help from the European Union. Yet the party favours the importation of foreign labour in sectors where Maltese labour is scarce.

AN's immigration policy enjoys highest levels of popularity among males (15%) and those aged under 34 (14%), and lowest among females and those over 55.

Significantly AN attracts its greatest support among younger males. Among men aged 18 to 34 years of age AN's stance on immigration is more popular than that of the three other parties. Among this category, one quarter – 25% – claim to favour AN's immigration policy.

The widespread support for AN's immigration policies is not reflected in electoral support for the very right party which registers only 0.6% in the latest MaltaToday poll.

50% of those opting for AN's immigration policies would vote for one of the other three parties. More of these would vote for the PN (26.3%) than for the MLP (21.3%).

Yet significantly, 49% of those who opt for the far right's policies on immigration are still not committed on their voting intentions.

This means that 4.3% of all respondents opt for AN's immigration's policy, and would not state for which party they would vote in the forthcoming election.

Of the others, the Nationalist



**Which party has the best policies on illegal immigration?**

PN	23.5
MLP	17.8
AD	2.7
AN	11.1
None	10.2
Don't know	34.2
No reply	0.5



**Gonzi:** The Nationalist Party is marginally perceived as the party with the best policy on immigration, with 23.5% of preferences



**Sant:** The MLP's policy on immigration only attracts the support of 18% of respondents



**Vassallo:** AD – the only party to advocate shorter detention periods for illegal immigrants – scores a lowly 2.7%



**Muscat:** Like other extreme right-wing parties in Europe, AN has exploited immigration fears turning human tragedy into a political football

Party is marginally perceived as the party with the best policy on immigration, with 23.5% of preferences.

The MLP's policy on immigration only attracts the support of 18% of respondents. AD – the only party to advocate shorter detention periods for illegal immigrants – scores a lowly 2.7%.

The electoral campaign has so far been marked by a consensus among the three mainstream parties, with all three parties calling for a better deal from the European Union to help Malta tackle the influx of immigrants.

Although the mainstream parties fail to attract the support of the majority of respondents on this issue, 44% of respondents are either undecided or trust neither party on this issue.

This could be an indication that voters do not see any substantial difference between the main parties, and are thus unable to choose.

**BY AGE GROUP**

	PN	MLP	AD	AN	None	Don't know	No reply
18-34	23.5	15.7	0.7	13.7	11.8	33.3	1.3
35-54	19.1	17.1	4.6	7	9.9	42.2	0
55+	27	20.2	1.5	7.8	10.1	32.8	0.5

**BY GENDER**

	PN	MLP	AD	AN	None	Don't know	No reply
Males	24.4	19.7	3.4	15	9.9	27.6	0
Females	22.8	17.8	1.8	5.9	10.1	40.9	0.7

**AMONG MALES AGED 18-34**

PN	22.2
MLP	11.1
AD	1.6
AN	25.4
None	9.5
Don't know	30.2

**VOTING PREFERENCE OF THOSE OPTING FOR AN'S POLICY**

PN	26.2
MLP	21.3
AD	2.5
AN	1.3
Not Voting	5
Don't know	28.8
No reply	15

**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%.

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# Josie unfazed by racist label



MATTHEW VELLA

AZZJONI Nazzjonali leader Dr Josie Muscat yesterday said his far-right party would not be fazed by accusations of racism, underlining once again his party's hard-line policy on irregular immigration.

On Sunday, addressing a small crowd in Zebbug, Muscat called immigrants "enemies of the state" – his most vociferous speech so far.

In a press conference yesterday, Muscat described his party as "patriotic".

"The people who call us racists are cowards who are not capable of defending our country's sovereignty," Muscat said.

"Today, countries like Eng-

land, Germany and Australia have lost control, and today the critics can see what's coming in to our country. It's enough to witness incidents of arrogance from these immigrants whom we saved and fed."

Muscat said his party would not be bothered by anyone accusing them of being racists. "We are convinced of what we are saying and that it is in the interest of our children. Let's not compromise the sovereignty of our country and the future of generations yet to come."

On Sunday, Muscat described irregular immigration as an "invasion", going as far as saying that "the invader is an enemy of the state."

He also lashed out at the media whom he called "hypocrites".

# 'Pro-business' AN tour shops in Hamrun

AZZJONI Nazzjonali leader Josie Muscat and deputy leader Anglu Xuereb met shop owners in the St Joseph High Road in Hamrun to discuss problems facing small businesses.

Muscat told journalists that AN was a party which recognised workers' rights and aspirations to live well, and said his party was in favour of a higher minimum wage and a higher threshold for the payment of tax.

"We want to gradually increase minimum wage in consultation with employers because the present rate can't be taken seriously. People are either living in poverty or working other jobs. We want a fair and simple tax. We are a pro-business party and we are sorry that businesses are just seen as cows which are there to be milked. They are seen as thieves," Muscat said, complaining of excessive EU regulations and paperwork that businessmen have to contend with.

"And while businessmen are branded as thieves, there is no form of relief for those facing bankruptcy who need a helping hand."

An AN candidate, whose name cannot be published by court order, and who stands accused in a police investigation over the money laundering of Lm900,000

Muscat also railed against the Tax Compliance Unit's assessments which went as far as nine years back into businesses' practice. His party advocates a two-year maximum limit to TCU investigations.



Josie says that while businessmen are branded as thieves, there is no form of relief for those facing bankruptcy who need a helping hand. One of his candidates and high AN officials is meanwhile accused in a police investigation over the money laundering of Lm900,000 but his name cannot be published by court order

Muscat also reiterated his party's 18% flat-tax rate. He said AN wanted to create a venture capital bank for start-up entrepreneurs who would be given a two-year moratorium on loans and pay interest rates

at later stages. Anglu Xuereb also said a mixed system of paying interest calculated on profits rather than turnover, could help incentivise start-up entrepreneurs.

Muscat also said a one-stop shop should be set up for businesses who shouldn't have to navigate through one government department to the other.

And he said AN wanted to provide 600 housing units in

the Cottonera area for anyone wanting to open a business. These would be sold at Lm20,000 by the government itself.

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# Ghost of a cohabitation proposal



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA

**JULIA FARRUGIA**

PRIME Minister Lawrence Gonzi stumbled again when it came to the issue of cohabitation – an electoral promise by his predecessor in 1998 but never implemented over the intervening two legislations.

During a political debate on TVM last Tuesday Gonzi told MaltaToday that the PN's 1998 promise on cohabitation is still in his party's electoral programme.

However, none of the 353 proposals in the manifesto refers to this issue. During the same debate Lawrence Gonzi said that "it is not true that the electoral promise vanished from his electoral programme. It could be that not everyone reads all the propos-

als. But it is there."

Asked by this paper to pinpoint the exact page of the manifesto which speaks about cohabitation, Gonzi said simply: "It's there. I will repeat the same paragraph I told you last time."

Lawrence Gonzi then rattled off the same electoral promise, included in the PN manifesto, to change the law to protect offspring born out of wedlock: an important initiative in its own right, but which has nothing to do with the legal recognition of unmarried couples.

The Prime Minister said this during a walkabout in Fgura: the only PN activity open to the press, in the course of which Gonzi visited various shops in the town's main commercial area.

Amongst these outlets,

Gonzi visited a shop selling all items at €1. The Premier expressed surprise that there were energy saving light-bulbs on the shelves, and he looked dumbfounded when told that they even boasted a six-year lamp life.

Highlighting Government's initiatives on environment, Gonzi told the shopkeeper that Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech did an outstanding job at the VAT Department.

"Bills at the VAT department were astonishingly curtailed after changing all the bulbs," exclaimed Gonzi.

Evidently, this light-bulb issue provided a flash of inspiration for the ever-present ONE TV crew. During a press conference held in Chain supermarket, the ONE reporter asked the Prime Minister whether he asked businessmen

in Fgura if they preferred five free light-bulbs provided by a new Nationalist Government, to a halved surcharge bill under Sant's new Government.

Lawrence Gonzi admitted that he did not ask such a question, but promised ONE crew that he will be embarking on this project asking businessmen which of the two options they preferred.

As usual during these events, the Prime Minister is only allowed to answer to one or two questions. So when a third question materialised – about Ninu Zammit's recent accusations regarding Alfred Sant - Lawrence Gonzi was whisked out of the supermarket so fast that someone from his entourage accidentally knocked over a shelf full of Mentos.

Talk about a "fresh" way of doing politics...

**'It could be that not everyone reads all the proposals. But it is there'**

## The real challenges in Mater Dei are yet to come

Austin Gatt on the hospital's IT System

INVESTMENT and Technology Minister Austin Gatt said yesterday that when it comes to Mater Dei hospital, the biggest challenges are yet to come.

Gatt passed this comment to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi while visiting Megabyte Ltd in the Mosta Technopark yesterday. The company which is a pioneer in the developing of IT solutions such as the National ID card, the Electoral Register system and VAT system, already embraced an AD delegation a week ago. Today it will be Alfred Sant's turn to visit the company.

While being shown around different departments, Lawrence Gonzi had time to chat with different workers entering into technical conversations clearly showing his passion for IT and software development.

At one point the hospital issue was raised.

Dr Austin Gatt was heard whispering a comment: "the real challenges in Mater Dei are yet to come (il-kbir ghadu gej)".

Asked by MaltaToday to justify this statement, at the end of this visit, Austin Gatt said that he was referring to the phase when all the Health Centres will be connected to Mater Dei and to the general practitioners (GPs).

"When we'll get that system we will be the only country in the world wherein your health records and the interfaces between the hospital and polyclinics will be online," Dr Gatt said.



Asked to give a concrete date when this system will be in place, Gatt mentioned a time frame of between five and seven years. On the financial costing of such a project, Investment Minister was unable to answer saying that this still had to be budgeted.

Megabyte Ltd employs 55 people, 30% of whom are women. Dr Lawrence Gonzi said that this company is a "success story."

Talking about Smart City, one of the directors expressed concern saying that if there were not enough Maltese

trained in this sector Malta will end up exactly like Dubai, where there are more foreign workers than locals.

Lawrence Gonzi pledged the Government's commitment to investing more in IT courses, thus eliminating such a scenario.

"Our target is that the jobs are occupied by Maltese," insisted Gonzi, identifying MCAST as one concrete example. "Others dismantled MCAST. Shame on those who only looked short-term."

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# AD calls for full liberalisation of public transport service

**CHARLOT ZAHRA**

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Harry Vassallo has called for a wholesome reform of the public transport service, with the liberalisation of scheduled bus services and taxi services, which are currently a monopoly.

Speaking during a press conference yesterday afternoon outside Hastings Gardens in Valletta, Vassallo said: "We want Malta to reach a very high standard of urban mobility, thus reducing expenses for families, reduce the inconvenience of parking and provide real choices for those who want to travel in a private car, as well as those who want to travel via public transport, or in a private car with car pooling, car sharing, and Pay-Per-Use options."

"It is fitting that Malta, a country whose maximum length is 27 kilometres, should become the envy of bigger countries where the difficulties for commuting for work or for leisure are more difficult," Vassallo said.

AD said it was in favour of the continuation of the Connections Project, which was proposed by the 1996-1998 Labour Government, which would make the whole port area a single city which can be accessed on foot. This would reduce traffic both at Msida as well as at Marsa.

It was also proposing the in-

troduction of mini-vans which would travel from one location to the other according to the needs of the passengers.

"If AD is invited to form part of a coalition, we would kick off the process for the selection of the means of mass transport, such as the underground railway, which is so much needed for the country's future," Vassallo said.

AD was pledging that works on this project would have started by the end of the five year term of the new Government.

Moreover, AD reiterated its proposal that all 18-year-olds who relinquish their right to a private vehicle should be provided free

public transport. They would also be allowed to possess a low-powered motorcycle.

AD was also proposing that all low-powered vehicles should be given access to bus lanes as well.

"It is the duty of every Government to provide a selection of public transport and others which are reliable, accessible and reach all the island," Vassallo said.

Vassallo said that bus lanes should be increased so that "the only relative advantage of public transport – privacy – is counterbalanced by the fact that public transport would be faster."

On the question of parking,

Vassallo said: "The new CVA system introduced in Valletta, although it can be improved, has been received very well. It has given residents the possibility of not suffering from the impact of use of parking by other people."

"We are proposing that residents' parking systems are introduced in all localities in consultation with residents and local councils.

"If these systems are introduced in some places but not in others, you would be putting at a disadvantage those who are not residents. If in a locality there a particular privilege, then all residents in all localities should be

able to enjoy that privilege.

"There are different circumstances in different localities – there are places that have fewer parking problems than in other places. However there are places like Sliema, Birkirkara, Hamrun and other urban centres where there are particular parking problems," Vassallo said.

There should also be solutions for those industries which generate a lot of commuters. "If traffic is reduced and public transport is improved, then the problem of parking would be addressed as well," Vassallo said.

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**All 18-year-olds who relinquish their right to a private vehicle should be provided free public transport**

Josie wouldn't mind some subsidies for his Eden foundation but wants open centres closed down



# AN champions all 'vulnerable groups'... except immigrants

**SABRINA AGIUS**

AZZJONI Nazzjonali leader Josie Muscat sees no contradiction between offering more assistance to people with diverse needs, while pursuing a decidedly anti-immigration agenda.

Asked yesterday by this newspaper to explain the difference in policy regarding various categories of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disability, single mothers and immigrants, Muscat replied: "We are against illegal immigrants. I repeat that by illegal immigrants we refer to those who come by boat without documents, and also those who come to Malta with a visa and then stay in Malta (after their visa has expired). This problem hit our country due to bad administration which totally is out of control. We always sustained that Malta should take its responsibility and keep only a predetermined amount of immigrants, this in agreement with other EU countries and the United Nations."

"Azzjoni Nazzjonali's position on the issue is very clear. Malta is the smallest EU country and most densely populated (in the EU) so we cannot take on Africa's burdens and responsibility," Muscat insisted. "Whilst we accept that we must save other people's lives when they are in danger and help them when help is needed, we believe that after a period of time, for example a month, then they should go to the other prospective countries. If the EU and UN keep pulling our leg, it shows that they don't want them in their own countries. In this case, our interest

remains the sovereignty of our country, our religion, our culture and our society. We should take unilateral decisions in the interest of our country and these decisions should be in line with internal conventions such as the Dublin Convention."

"AN was not ashamed and scared to express its thoughts on the topic, which is of national importance, whilst consciously not avoiding the problems faced by our soldiers, police, and the Maltese population"

He then turned his guns onto the single mothers' issue. He pointed out that "AN has no problem with non-abusive single mothers. AN's concern arises when single mothers abuse the social security system. Their abuse means abusing from the tax payers' money and at the end of the day, this is the population's money. This also reflects negatively on our society, on the single mother herself, and on the children who suffer physically, psychologically and morally," Muscat said. "The government should assist these single mothers to reunite back in a traditional family through either NGOs or with the help of priests in the community."

Making reference to the Eden Foundation, Muscat boasted that the charity organisation he himself founded in 1992, was the first of its kind to have facilitators working with people with disability. "Eden Foundation believed that people with a mental disability can be taught and learn how to make a living and live as full citizens in their own right."

"No one can deny that aid should be given to people who were born with a disability, or

who along the way, had an accident and remained with a disability. Due to the constraints it brings with it, ageing is also considered partly as a form of disability," said Muscat.

Unlike their position on illegal immigrants and single mothers, AN believe that since family is more suited to look after the elderly more than their family "financial aid should be subsidised by the Government so that they remain within the family. Or at least live in the comfort of their home."

AN further proposes that whoever applies for this system, shall have a tax rebate

equal to the national minimum wage. Eventually, when they die, whoever would have been looking after them would benefit from the tax rebate for the same amount of years which they would have been assisting them. However, this must not exceed three years.

Muscat's party is against alienating people with disability and the elderly. He asserted that AN "is totally against building another Imgieret (retirement home) within the St Luke's premises, as this goes against the whole concept of modernisation. They should not be left out of society."

During the press conference Muscat also spoke about AN's position on abortion. "AN is against abortion and is against the act of aborting people with disability."

AN is proposing a measure whereby parents who send their disabled children to private schools, should also benefit from the services a facilitator for free.

AN believes that the Government should subsidise serious NGOs to help them in their good work.

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**No one can deny that aid should be given to people who were born with a disability**



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA



# Sant sees golf filling tourism holes

DAVID DARMANIN

PROPOSING a plan to reach a tourism revenue of €1.5 billion over a span of three to five years, Labour leader Alfred Sant yesterday told a press conference that, if elected in government, the MLP will be setting up a golf course in Malta and another in Gozo.

Sant stressed that any golf courses developed in Malta, due to size limitations, should be stand-alones, "not like what has been proposed for Xagħra l-Amra, where the development of real estate was also included in the proposal".

While mentioning that the Labour Party has identified Magħtab in Malta and Tal-Qortin in Gozo as ideal sites, Sant did not mention that he would exclude granting permission for the construction of a golf course at Ta' en, as long as it is a stand-alone.

"We have a proposal for Ta' en so far, but we have also identified tal-Qortin as a location. This area is large enough to be developed into a stand-alone golf course," he said.

A MEPA application for the development of a golf course at Ta' en had stirred controversy in 2006, motivating the green lobby to collect signatures for a petition as part of a campaign they called "Save Ta' en Now".

Asked by this newspaper whether the Labour Party has conducted a feasibility study on stand-alone golf courses, Sant said: "Businessmen are saying that stand-alones are not feasible. With new ways of looking at things, we believe

they can work. With better use of Malta's resources, they can work."

Throughout his speech, Sant emphasised that certain resources are mismanaged, committing himself to the better use of "resources that we are not using, resources that we aren't using enough, resources that we aren't using properly and resources that we are using wrongly."

"Tourism is really backwards," he stated. Mentioning that although over the past years, Malta witnessed one of the worst declines in tourism figures, Sant acknowledged that with the advent of low cost airlines operating to and from Malta, "we have started gaining ground."

"Low cost airlines have helped Maltese tourism resurface," he added. "What has been done, however, was piecemeal... We spent too much time trying to adjust to the phenomenon of low-cost airlines. We take into account that Malta can benefit from this phenomenon, although at the same time, we need to consolidate and strengthen AirMalta."

On this subject, Sant criticised the PN government for "squandering the national airline's funds that it had been amassing for years."

Adding that the "package Malta has to offer for tourism is unbalanced," Sant mentioned that "Malta cannot enter certain tourism markets in the EU", due to the closure of a series of three star hotels throughout the island. Committing himself to encourage the setting up of three star hotels, Sant added: "Five star hotels have had to reduce prices, acting as four and

three star hotels."

Turning to the importance of encouraging niche tourism, the Labour leader mentioned the need of paying further attention to conferences and incentives, agri-tourism, diving, cultural and religious tourism. "We do not work enough on these sectors," he claimed.

Mentioning English language students, Sant said that since "for the past two or three years, students were being allocated in hotels", this sector put itself into an unfavourable position.

"In hotels, students also have a tendency to make noise," he said, making a humorous comparison to university students, "and this often disturbs neighbouring guests and families."

Moving onto infrastructural development, Sant said: "Natural, urban, maritime and historical environment need to be restructured across the board if we are to compete with other European holiday destinations. We will keep on investing towards this goal."

He also discussed highlights related to development plans for Gozo, Bu'ibba, St Paul's Bay, Xemxija, the south and the Grand Harbour.

For Gozo, Sant proposed more focus on marketing the island as a separate tourism destination in order to promote foreign tourism in the region, not merely Maltese.

Yacht marinas and three-star hotels seem to be earmarked for the northern region, together with an infrastructural upgrade to enable better service for divers and rambles, among others.

For the south, Sant promised

the completion of "embellishment projects that had been started and never completed – such as the coasts of Marsaskala, Bir-ebbu-a and Marsaxlokk."

"This work will be done," he added, "together with an effort to re-include a five-star hotel in Marsaskala, so as to let its guests revive tourism-related small businesses in the area."

For the Grand Harbour, including Marsamxett, Msida and Sliema; Sant stated that a Labour government would address tourism in the area for the long-term, and in collaboration with the private sector.

"A five-star hotel is also needed in Cottonera," he said. Included in the Grand Harbour plan is a yacht marina and a further focus on cruise liner tourism. "A parliament-appointed specific authority," he promised, "will be set up in order to manage projects in the Grand Harbour with efficiency."

Last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) lowered the economic growth forecasts for Malta and last week it was the European Commission to lower targets for every country in the Eurozone. Asked by MaltaToday whether, due to this international scenario, the MLP is still confident on developing Malta's economy by 4 to 6%, Sant seemed convinced of his predictions, irrespective of the expectations of international authorities.

"We are aware of these forecasts," he said. "Better use of resources and utilisation of spare capacity are key to our electoral manifesto."

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**'Businessmen say stand-alone golf courses are not feasible. We believe they are' – Sant**

## Harry Vassallo shoots down Sant's stand-alone golf course proposal

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokritika (AD) Chairperson Harry Vassallo shot down Labour leader Alfred Sant's proposal of a stand-alone golf course at Ta' Cenc made during a press conference earlier yesterday.

Asked by MaltaToday for his reaction to the Labour proposals during a press conference at Hastings Gardens in Valletta yesterday afternoon, Vassallo said: "I think that the Opposition leader should take responsibility of the proposals that he makes."

"I think during the past 11

years where we have debated the golf courses issue, it has been clearly established that a stand-alone golf course is not economic feasible. Golf courses are usually proposed by those who have in mind a development project consisting of villas.

"With regards to Magħtab, I do not think that this is the ideal place where to host sports facilities or locations where people meet en masse. We will discuss these locations after serious studies about the pollution that is still coming out of Mount Magħtab," Vassallo told MaltaToday.

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# Shrieking and waking

At last! The operetta of the deputy leader of the Labour party Michael Falzon: shrieking away on the Fosos in Floriana, rising to a falsetto and then waving his hands like a hysterical barmaid on the sinking Titanic. The scene has hit the strategy group in the Nationalist party machine like a tornado. And they have decided to act.



Saviour Balzan

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They have finally decided to lift their undeclared censorship over their journalists, and allow them to televise clips of the deputy leader of the Labour party being what he really is: a load of hot air.

So finally someone has woken up after having tried for months to give the impression that Michael Falzon is a soft spoken man and a better alternative to Alfred Sant. Too late, chums.

But the PN have smaller fish to fry. In what is considered to be a calculated operation to decimate any reasonable electoral threat, the PN machine has decided to continue hitting out at AD and not say a word at AN.

Again, just yesterday night Simon Busuttill once again tried his hand at AD bashing and informed us that a vote for AD would be a waste. Next time someone comes up with a Nobel prize for democratic credentials, please do not forget to nominate Simon. Yes, Simon the man from Europe. Mark my words: one day Simon will show his true colours.

But what was more austere is that he did not have one word of criticism for Josie's party. Not one word. Not one word for this former Nationalist militant and MP.

It was not because he does not believe they should be rapped on the knuckles, but simply because Mr Joe Saliba thinks that the best policy is to ignore Josie and paint AD as the infidel.

I am sick and tired of all this demoralisation.

I had thousands of fans booked to run away with me on 8 March for a feast of "cozze" and "vongole" in Siracusa. I have told them that I am housebound because of a more

pressing personal issue; but many have told me that they are so annoyed by these dirty tactics that they are staying home to cast their vote.

Just look at the blogs and see what people are saying to the PN's heavy handedness.

## The GWPBN and the PNGWAT

So Joe Saliba is not quite sure whether the damage caused to Harry Vassallo's property was perpetrated by Nationalists. Harry Vassallo's property was damaged minutes after a mass meeting held by the PN in Sliema.

So it must have been the GWPBN and the PNGWAT.

Saliba, in an answer to this newspaper, condemned the culprits but when quizzed about controlling naughty Nationalists who could stir trouble, he answered: "... it could have been committed by somebody else on purpose."

By the way, the GWPBN is a special unit created by the Greens; it stands for Greens Who Pretend To Be Nationalists. They were specially organised to organise fake attacks on Greens, and then blame it on the Nationalists.

As if it is impossible to imagine that out of the thousands of Nationalist supporters - out of all those in who make up what we have now termed PN groupies - none are capable of becoming slightly mischievous.

With Joe's reasoning, we should take it that the alleged bomb threat to DCG could easily have been concocted... not by not some deviant Labourite, but by Nationalists, probably members of the PNGWAT.

By the way the PNGWAT are the "PN Groupies Who Attack Themselves."

Well, it is a very strange world, made stranger by this habit of attacking oneself, maiming oneself, reporting threats. It all seems to have gotten a little bit out of hand.

I remember way back in the good old days of David Casa when the IVA office in a little well-lit street in Gzira was attacked.



**Mr Joe Saliba thinks that the best policy is to ignore Josie and paint AD as the infidel**

## Crappy

And if crap was not enough to worry about. We now know that what is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander.

DJ Ruby is one of those DJs that I would probably find as distasteful as smoked herring, but for those with short memories, it has to be said that years back when the unfortunate DJ was asked to play at a PN gathering, the MLP revealed that the poor DJ had a conviction over drug possession.

Hmm. Now I find out that DJ Ruby will now be playing for the MLP in one of those Viva l-Lejber concerts.

I guess it has got to do with the Labour's new policy of erasing memory and rejuvenating itself.

So anyone who thinks I am being a pain in the ass, please note that it is very intentional exercise.

## Luxol, here we come

The decision to organise the last mass meeting at Luxol by the MLP is indeed a very stupid one.

The Labour consultant who came up with the idea of ending the campaign in Nationalist blue territory should be sent to sleep with Obama's consultant for at least a week.

The worst nightmare for any Nationalist, even those who may be thinking of voting Labour, is to see a arcade of frantic and very loud Labourites with red flags banging and screaming in the same horrible manner Michael Falzon was screeching and waving at the Fosos on Sunday.

Well thank God, Phil Noble is not around.

## Jo Said, once again

Now back to the Greens. I hear that Jo Said and his wife have joined the Greens.

Great news, that is, if you believe that Jo Said is an asset to your political platform. Do the Greens really think they have made a great acquisition to their regiment? But is he really an asset?

This Said has turned out to be like that albatross that turns up at your boat wailing doomsday.

But the stark truth is that Jo Said is just another disgruntled Nationalist, nothing more, nothing less.

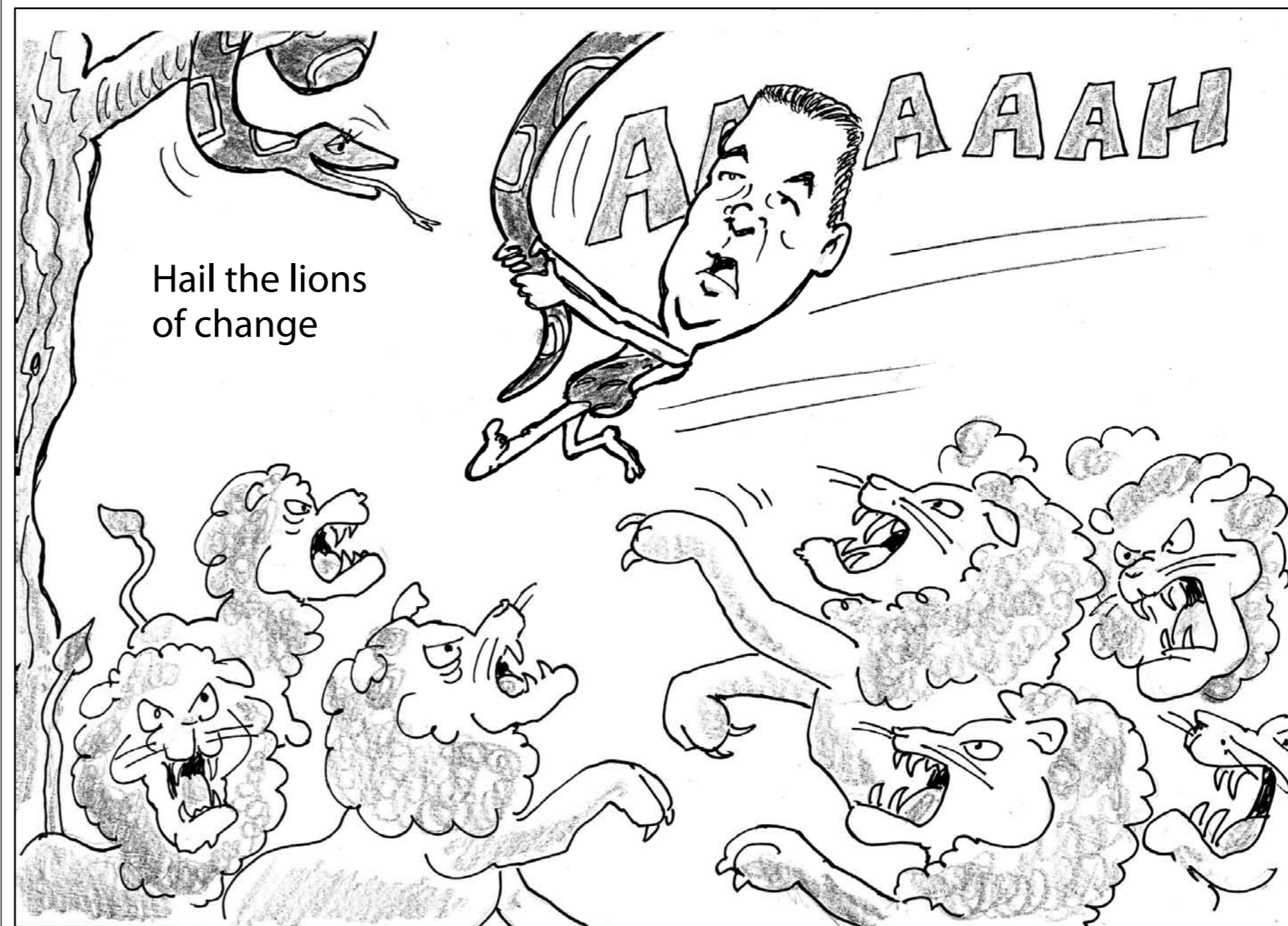
And for both the AD or the MLP to take advantage of Jo Said is dangerous when one looks at the history of turncoats in the last elections.

The grand attack was to the door knobs (Euro signs), which were bent, and a little stone carefully thrown at a small balcony window.

Before the IVA committee (of which I was then a member) had chance to meet, Mr Casa was quick to issue a press release condemning the attack.

I was not quite sure what to say. But I am sure that the little stone must have been thrown by a group of inebriated ballerinas, or better still the garden gnomes from the Gzira gardens across the road.

But then, who am I not to believe that it was probably a carefully planned terrorist attack by the CNI? Can we stop this crap please, NOW!



## maltatoday Editorial

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# Stop the scaremongering

OUR opinion poll released last Sunday clearly showed that the two traditional parties are neck and neck. This snapshot of public opinion should also be viewed in the context of a significant amount in the "Undecided" category of voters; equally significant is the margin of error (+/-3.3%), which naturally exists for either side, making any prediction to say the least risky.

Essentially, it's an all-to-play-for scenario and this explains the edgy and panic mode dominating both camps. For what else can explain the overwhelming importance being given to negative campaigning and scaremongering, common characteristics in the initial stages of all campaigns which tend, as D-day approaches, to turn into an explanation of one's proposals and vision for society over the next five years? We are still awaiting the change of gear from both leaders in the driving seat.

This election campaign is being dominated by scaremongering and a big dose of negativity, with the electorate being bombarded daily by TV spots and billboards all over the country. The messages are clear: an old team which has been in office for 20 years; and in an opposition, an equally old team that was

in office under different prime ministers 30 years ago.

Regrettably, however, the worst spates of negative campaigning are reserved for the education sphere. Accusations of reception class and repeater class, removal of junior college and examinations, are flying all over the place, putting parents who are ever-jealous of their children's education into panic mode. Education could have been spared this political ping-pong if only Labour heeded the MUT's advice not to propose the reception class as an electoral promise.

This all smacks of political irresponsibility since our educational system should, like the financial services sector, have a bi-partisan approach. This is the most sacred thing available in our society and yet our politicians play with it like a political football. Shame on them.

With only 11 days to go we advise both parties to lower the tempo of their negative campaigns and to put into full drive their proposals and programmes. Elections in mature democracies are all about the discussion, examination and acceptance or rejection of electoral programmes. What future are people voting for? This is the question which

needs explanation before the court of public opinion. Of course this also involves an assessment of what the parties have done in government as also equally important the records of the prime ministerial term of office of both Alfred Sant and Lawrence Gonzi themselves but the trust of all successful campaigns is projecting a future and giving people a dream. This explains the American Obama phenomenon, he is giving the electorate a dream a vision and confidence in his succinct slogan yes we can. With the restoration of democracy and the membership of the European Union, the country is yearning for a dream; yet neither of the traditional parties has as yet managed to concretise this dream: other than to clamour that the country needs five more years of stability; or the call for change without any indication that this "change" involves more than just a changing of the guard.

Where is the beef we keep asking for? In return, all we hear of is more and more scaremongering.

The parties need to concretise their proposals in fully-backed programmes of action. The Nationalist proposal that the Prime Minister will take full

responsibility for MEPA was a masterstroke since his high level credibility and standing assures people that this monster of an organisation may be humanised under a safe pair of hands. Yet to date Dr Gonzi has failed to concretise exactly what he will do, leaving the perception that the finer details of the decision have not been sufficiently knitted up. As always, the devil is in the detail.

Equally well received has been the leader of the Opposition's commitment to a zero tolerance policy on corruption. This policy however needs beefing up, apart from the Woods fiasco in its initial launching stages. How will the aspiring prime minister control corruption? Will he vet his candidates, and eventually his ministers, more carefully? Will he introduce legislation to eradicate conflict of interest? Will he subject political appointees to grilling by parliament? We await answers.

If both traditional parties carry on scaremongering and running negative campaigns they can bet their bottom euro that a not-insignificant number of undecided voters will be pushed into the waiting arms of one of the two smaller parties.

**ELECTION SPECIAL**

**maltatoday**

ON SALE TOMORROW - DON'T MISS OUT



# Day of reckoning for spring hunting... and for Pullicino

With the spring hunting ball being kicked from one court to another, the Environment Minister now faces a dilemma: either boost his own electoral chances, or sacrifice himself for the good of his Cabinet colleagues

**RAPHAEL VASSALLO**



George's vultures: Giovanna Debono, Louis Galea, Ninu Zammit, Tony Abela, Louis Deguara  
**According to the figures of registered hunters and trappers in the various localities, the most worrying for the Nationalists in government are arguably Gozo, presided over by Giovanna Debono; Siggiewi, home to Nationalist heavyweights like Louis Galea and Ninu Zammit; Rabat and environs, contested by Tony Abela; and Mosta/Naxxar, stronghold of Louis Deguara – himself a hunter, at least on paper.**

this faint hope; and not without good reason, for deferment in this case is likely to appease hunters and birders alike, at least until elections are out of the way. But in private it is doubtful that he shares the hunters' optimism for the long term.

The law of political expedience makes it impossible for any Nationalist exponent to ever admit this, but for four whole years the incumbent government has known perfectly well that there was never any real chance of a permanent derogation to the Birds Directive.

The official version of events, compounded by the Malta EU Information Centre's declarations of 2003, is that the government had negotiated a special exemption for the hunting of turtle dove and quail during spring. But we now know that all the government really negotiated was a clause in the Environment Chapter specifying that Malta can always apply for a derogation under Article 9: a fact which is equally applicable to all other member states.

**No news is good news**  
 After the last Ornis meeting two weeks ago, the FKNK released a statement praising Ornis's non-decision as "judicious". Faced with an almost inevitable future ban of their hobby in spring, the hunters seem to have welcomed news of Ornis' non-decision much like a last-minute stay of execution. And even if the hope is slender, individual hunters, egged on by their federation representatives, still cling to the belief that a deal may yet be reached for Malta to wriggle out of its ongoing legal battle with the Commission.

**The election factor**  
 On a purely constituency level, George Pullicino finds himself in a unique and not entirely unenviable position.  
 For Pullicino contests the 10th district, which includes Sliema and St Julian's: two localities not known for their passionate love of hunting (although ironically, St Julian is himself the activity's patron saint).

Also to be borne in mind is the recent upsurge in environmentalist enthusiasm – some would say militancy – in these localities: particularly in Sliema, which has been a shop-window for the construction industry ever since the building explosion of the early 1990s.

Unsurprisingly, the haemorrhage to Alternattiva Demokratika has been more keenly felt in the 10th district than anywhere else. Sliema was also the birthplace of Flimkien Ghal Ambjent Aħjar, an outspoken critic of the government's environmental policies, and often a thorn in the side of Pullicino himself (vide the protest slogan "Vote George, Get Lorry", which has since been subliminally absorbed into the national psyche).

But as we all saw in the case of the recent Ramla l-Hamra controversy, environmental disgruntlement can turn to instant kudos for the minister with a single strategically-timed U-turn.

Even without environmentalist pressure, hunting remains a bone of contention to the tourism industry, whose chief exponents have for years complained about its negative effect on our international reputation as a tourist destination. Again, the 10th district, with its myriad hotels and restaurants, is positioned on the front line of this ongoing battle.

In a sense, Pullicino is faced with a somewhat stark choice. If he takes the plunge and bans spring hunting once and for all, he could quite easily boost his own image and electoral fortunes at a crucial stage. Considering that the decision is virtually inevitable anyway, and that Pullicino does not really stand to lose anything on a constituency level as a result,

some might wonder why he didn't ban spring hunting ages ago.  
 But then, Pullicino is not a lone ranger, and has his own Cabinet colleagues to deal with, too.

**The rural/urban divide**  
 If the urban 10th district is a heartland for the anti-hunting confraternity, other more rural districts, especially in the north, are very much the other way round. Recently, the FKNK published statistics of registered hunters and trappers in the various localities. Of these, the most worrying for the Nationalists in government are arguably Gozo, presided over by Giovanna Debono; Siggiewi, home to Nationalist heavyweights like Louis Galea and Ninu Zammit; Rabat and environs, contested by Tony Abela; and Mosta/Naxxar, stronghold of Louis Deguara – himself a hunter, at least on paper.

In many respects this fault-line also defines the internal divisions of the Nationalist Party – an institution torn between the aspirations of an increasingly more demanding and green-minded middle-class, and a rural conservatism which views hunting

as a deeply ingrained cultural tradition. When it comes to brass tacks, though, the issue is all about votes: not just whether the pro-hunting lobby outnumbered its environmentalist equivalent, but which of the PN's front-running candidates stands to lose the most on his or her home turf.  
 The battleground to date has been Cabinet meetings, where Pullicino is reportedly under constant pressure from his colleagues in rural districts to postpone the spring hunting issue indefinitely.

The status quo favours the hunters, who can keep their hopes alive until the next legislature. It favours George Pullicino himself, as this way he can fend off criticism while privately informing the Greens that they will get their hunting ban eventually anyway. And birders, even if disappointed, can at least draw satisfaction from the fact that this year's spring hunting season is unlikely to open on schedule, if at all.

But it doesn't favour Malta's ongoing case with the EC in the European Courts of Justice. And that is where the cookie will ultimately crumble.

## FACTFILE: Ornis Committee

- Ornis is the government-appointed consultative body on all matters related to hunting and trapping, composed of both hunters' and birders' representatives.
- Its number one responsibility is to recommend dates for the spring hunting season to the Environment Minister.
- The Ornis Committee is legally obliged to issue its recommendations four weeks before the actual commencement of the season.
- Last year, the spring seasoned opened on 20 March.

## Football

# Hamrun secure place in Championship pool

**Hamrun 1 - Hibernians 1**  
 HAMRUN earned the point they needed to secure a place in the Championship pool. Hibernians played a strong game, but nonetheless it was Hamrun

who took the lead in the 63rd minute, when Branislav Timotic found himself unmarked in the penalty area and scored from close range.  
 Hibernians then played all out to try to get the win, but

all they could manage was to level the score 1-1 with a goal from Adrian Mifsud. Hibernians are now in the relegation pool.  
 Sean Sullivan was voted the BOV Player of the Match.

# Mqabba beat 10-man Msida

**Mqabba 2 - Msida St Joseph 1**  
 IN the other match of the night, Mqabba defeated Msida St Joseph by two goals to one.  
 Msida opened the score on the 23rd minute when Adrian Farrugia headed past the goal-

keeper to put Msida in the lead. But all was not good for Msida, when on 36 minutes Tyrone Farrugia was shown the red card. Mqabba took advantage of this and levelled the score on the 60th minute, when Mauro Bonnici scored

for Mqabba.  
 Twenty minutes later Mqabba put the game out of reach when Marcelo Pereira had a fantastic shot outside the box to beat Matthew Camilleri and give Mqabba the winning goal.

# Roma hit with injury crisis

ROMA have bit hit by a double injury disappointment as they prepare for Wednesday's do-or-die clash with leaders Inter.  
 The Giallorossi must at least draw with the stuttering Beniamata at San Siro if they are to remain in the Scudetto race.  
 Luciano Spalletti's side will be desperate to avenge Week

6's 4-1 thumping and could cut the deficit to six points with a win, but it has been confirmed that they will be without Brazilian stars Juan and Amantino Mancini.  
 Juan has been out of action for over a month, but there had been hopes he could return for this titanic struggle.

Despite his presence in training today, the former Bayer Leverkusen man will not travel to Milan even as a substitute.  
 Mancini was the star man in Roma's win over Real Madrid last Tuesday, but has since developed a muscular problem, which is almost certain to hand him a place in the stands.

## Motoring

# Lino Brincat's Vintage Class



VETERAN hill climb driver Lino Brincat, driving his Dallara Alfa Romeo won Sunday's opening round of the ICC Hill Climb and Sprint Championship, held at Mizieb. Lino, now nearing pensionable age, was in a class of his own and dominated the day's proceedings from run one.  
 The Mizieb event was the first round of the club's championship, and as usual attracted a good and varied entry, which included 10 single seater racing cars, and a good number of Group 5, 2 and 1 cars. Proceedings started right on time at 9am when clerk of the course Alex Zammit signaled the start of the first car, Frank Tonna's interesting Group 5 Mini 1400.  
 By 11am both practice runs had been completed and the 50 cars lined up for their first timed run. It was immediately clear that Lino Brincat had carried forward the form he had shown in the closing round of the 2007 Championship and was heading the time sheets just as he pleased. Behind him the usual battle raged between multiple Champion Hubert Camilleri (Chev-

ron Cosworth 2000), cousins Matthew and Zach Zammit and Joshua Anastasi, Steve Zammit Cutajar, Paul Deguara and other aspirants for an outright win, but at the end of the first timed run it was the old fox Lino by over a second and a half from Hubert, with Matthew a very close 3rd.  
 The final run is the one that matters and virtually every driver improved his time. Lino again improved slightly, as did Hubert, whilst Matthew made a slight mistake at the last hair-pin and Joshua was rewarded for 3 days hard work when he took another second off his previous time to claim 2nd place overall, with Hubert a very close third. Mark Galea was quickest of the touring cars, mixing it with the single seaters with his Subaru Impreza WRX. Other performances worth mentioning were those of David Libreri, Duncan Barbaro Sant, David Anastasi, Aldo Laferla, and newcomer Terrence Vella.  
 The next round of the championship is due to take place shortly after Easter at Gnejna where the battle will be resumed.

## Pursuits

### Sudoku

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

Yesterday's solution

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 had play and mate in three moves

Ne7+ c6  
 Qxc6+ Kd8  
 Qd7#

### Crossword


Answers to the MaltaToday crossword will be published tomorrow

### Today's Weather

**WARNINGS: Nil**

**WEATHER: Partly cloudy becoming rather cloudy at times**

**VISIBILITY: Good**

**WIND: Light to moderate Southwest (force 3 to 4) backing South to Southwest**

**SEA: Slight to moderate**

**SWELL: Negligible becoming low Easterly**

**MOSTLY CLOUDY**  
**17°C / 10°C**  
**UV INDEX: 4**

Yesterday's solution





# Government is not a game of dice.

**Sant gambled several times and Malta lost. Now he says he has no regrets.**

Alfred Sant likes to play games with people's lives. He likes to meddle with the economy and fiddle with education and foreign policy. He makes one terrible mistake after another. Then he says that he has no regrets. He says that the past is for historians and that he prefers to speak about a New Beginning. Ask him about his track record and he gets angry. Boo him, and he deploys his missiles.

Some people think that because we're in the Eurozone, Alfred Sant can do no damage. They might as well believe in Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy. All you have to do is look at the recent past in Greece and Italy to see that's not true.

A few bad decisions can send Malta's finances spinning out of control. And bad decisions seem to be the only thing that Sant is good at.

His track record as prime minister includes Malta's biggest 'hofra' ever at 10% of GDP, an increase in the national debt equivalent to 13% of GDP, soaring unemployment, 33 new taxes, and the slide into recession. Yes, and he turned his back on Europe.

Alfred Sant hasn't a clue how to manage Malta's finances. His men are forced to toe his line. He has now written the programme for a repeat performance. It includes many gross errors. First he called them misprints. Then he blamed the computer. The next thing we know, he'll be saying the dog ate his homework.

Now his electoral promises are changing every time he opens his mouth. Nobody can get a straight answer to a question about any of his proposed economic measures.

Government isn't the place where you learn the ropes. You have to go in knowing them already, or people suffer and so does the country. Life is not a game of chance, and neither is running the country.

Think about it.  
**Better safe than sorry.**

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## Gays declare AD friendliest party



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIPPA ZAMMIT CUTAJAR

**JULIA FARRUGIA**

THE Malta Gay Rights Movement yesterday declared that Alternattiva Demokratika is Malta's most gay-friendly party, followed by the Nationalist Party.

Talking to MaltaToday after a one-hour meeting with PN's general secretary Joe Saliba, Minister Louis Galea and MEP Simon Busuttill, coordinator of the MGRM coordinator Gabbi Calleja, described talks with the PN as "cordial".

"The meeting was more positive than we were expecting. There was a position in favour of the rights of same-sex couples living together. We are not talking about marriage but partnerships," explained Calleja at the end of the meeting held at PN headquarters during which MGRM presented a petition with 1,084 signatures.

Asked to point out which of the political parties is closest to what they believe in Malta Gay Rights Movement official stated: "I think it is Alternattiva Demokratika, followed then by the Nationalist Party. I think that Alternattiva is the party that even accepts our fifth request, that is access to health services."

The petition of the MGRM requests, among other things, the inclusion of gender reassignment surgery and hormone therapy for transgender persons as part of the public health services.

Gabbi Calleja confirmed that this was one of the main hurdles which sprouted during the PN meeting. Asked whether the Nationalist Party pledged a general guarantee on gay issues Calleja denied.

"Apart from the NCPE's issue which is highlighted in the PN manifesto the Nationalist Party gave us no guarantee. We still need to see if whether re-elected in Government there is concrete change. We want concrete actions and not empty words."

The MGRM coordinator also confirmed that they are still waiting for the Malta Labour Party to set up an appointment.

The Malta Gay Rights Movement first requested a meeting with Alternattiva Demokratika on 17 February. AD responded on the same day and a meeting was held on the 18th. That same day, MGRM extended the same request also to MLP, PN and AN.

"We're meeting Azzjoni Nazzjonali on Wednesday. The PN answered our request on the 22nd and we were given the appointment for one week after our request. The Malta Labour Party got back to us saying that Alfred Sant had a very busy schedule and that the party is trying to slot an appointment. We're still waiting," Calleja said.

*The MGRM's petition can be found at <http://www.petitiononline.com/MGRM01/petition.html>*

## Harry Vassallo's residence vandalised after PN meeting

**CHARLOT ZAHRA**

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) chairperson Harry Vassallo's residence in Sliema was vandalised at the end of the Nationalist Party (PN) meeting in Dingli Street on Sunday afternoon.

An AD statement issued late yesterday evening said that unidentified persons had damaged the glass pane covering the big window that there is on the ground floor of Vassallo's residence at Stella Maris Street: a "stone's throw" away from where the PN mass-meeting was held on the same day.

The AD chairperson, his wife and his two children were not at their residence at the time of the incident.

Deputy AD Chairperson Stephen Cachia expressed the party members and activists' unreserved solidarity with Vassallo and his family. He appealed for responsibility and moderation in the political statements during these days

"so that people's minds are not agitated and similar incidents are avoided".

Asked for his reaction to the vandal acts on Vassallo's house, PN Secretary-General Joe Saliba told MaltaToday yesterday evening that he "strongly condemns the act without any reservations, irrespective of who ever committed it".

Quizzed by this newspaper what measures the PN intended to take to ensure that similar incidents do not take place in future, Saliba said curtly: "How do you know that this was committed by Nationalist Party supporters? It could have been committed by somebody else on purpose".

Asked for his reaction to Saliba's statement, Vassallo told MaltaToday: "In the 18 years that I have been living here, I have never suffered a vandal act of any kind. It was only on Sunday after the PN meeting that this happened. The possibility that it might have been somebody else is there, but the probability is remote"