



TEARS FOR FEARS

Pullicino Orlando cries as MISTRA disco shocker embarrasses 'green' politician PG 5

NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL **MPs declared company income after reaching tax agreement**

LABOUR MPs Charles Mangion and Karmenu Vella yesterday said they only declared the income they made from their company Mirca Properties Ltd over eight years, in 2003 and 2004 - after reaching a tax agreement with the inland revenue department.

With accusations flying from the Nationalists accusing them of having filed "false declarations", and the two MPs filing for libel against Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, the Labour members were yesterday forced to come clean over the missing income in the accounts they presented to the MFSA after the PN published Mirca Properties' accounts to show that their rental incomes had not featured in their records. **pg 5**

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Charles Mangion and Karmenu Vella - 'we've declared our income'

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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



Jeffrey Pullicino
PN candidate on 7th and 11th districts

On cement plants and landfills
"If developers had their way on the cement plant the health of most Maltese people would have been affected. Had we developed a landfill next to Mnajdra we would have committed an act of disrespect against our ancestors as well as against future generations. Just imagine toilet paper blown by the wind on the face of the Neolithic megaliths."
30 July 2006, MaltaToday

On the extension of development zones
"I cannot risk leaving this sensitive task to a future Labour government. I hope that the PN will win the next election but I cannot afford to take any risks. Had we left this chapter open, in the remote eventuality of a Labour victory, Alfred Sant would have had a free hand to adjust the boundaries on a case-by-case basis."
30 July 2006, MaltaToday

On Ramla l-Hamra
"Like Ulysses Lodge the Verdala hotel is an eye-sore which ruins the landscape. But it is legally difficult to deny the developer a permit to replace an approved structure."
24 June 2007, MaltaToday

On the Mistrà land revelations
"I own a plot of land near the sea which has been rented out to others for some time now. Three years ago, these others applied for a permit to build an underground lavatory and an open-air dance floor less than two metres high. The only thing close is a well-known restaurant. The application has been pending all this time and no final decision has been made. I don't even know the applicants. I have never met them"
1 March 2008, The Times

Franco Galea
PN candidate on 9th and 10th districts

On immigration
"Is it true or untrue that these (klandestini) come to Malta with money in cash and satellite phones?... That they have access to phonecards, even though in their own countries there are no means of communication?... That

there are certain bus routes that Maltese citizens can't use?... That there is prostitution outside some of these centres...? That there are incidents between immigrants and Maltese people, and that these incidents are on the rise?"
Adjournment speech in parliament, December 2005

On solutions
"It is a question of space and resources – we don't have that. That is why we need to create safe zones. I can't mention any names of other places which would be suited for safe zones. It would be ideal to have them created in Africa."
24 July 2005, MaltaToday

On racist labels
"You can be labelled incorrectly because of other peoples' agendas, even in the case of the far right. If somebody is worried about the country, who am I to tell them they are incorrect? My duty is to talk about it."
24 July 2005, MaltaToday

On Christmas spirit
"In the final session before Parliament's Christmas recess Galea suggested all MPs donate Lm1,000 from their parliamentary honoraria towards a fund to organise Christmas parties for all employees of the civil service. Galea said rather than using civil service employees for political gain because of Christmas parties, it would be better for MPs to lead by example."
19 December 2004, MaltaToday

Joe Abela
MLP candidate 3rd District

On hunting and cannabis
"Today it is almost better to have a field sown with cannabis than to go with the shotgun in your own field. Why? Because we have cannabis available all over the country, you can acquire it anyway you like, whenever you want and from whoever you want, but if you go with the shotgun in your field, then no, then you have to face the special forces. We come with the special forces for you, and all the ensuing persecution. And their rights seem non-existent."
Adjournment speech in parliament, 11 December 2007

On immigrants' plight
"You and me cannot remain

silent when confronted by this situation. Refugees and irregular migrants are fellow human beings with a right to live. As a people we cannot remain indifferent in front of the death of migrants in our seas. Black skin or white skin makes no difference. Life has no price."
3 June 2007, Illum

On divorce
"This was what happened to me in the divorce question, when I expressed opposition to divorce. Fellow MPs and leadership people had actually praised me for taking a stand. But what happened? The people in your district start saying you are turning against the leader. Some people don't understand that the fight for your seat is against your very own colleagues in the district."
10 August 2003, MaltaToday

On Labour's future
"I think Labour's greatest challenge is how to collect everyone under one umbrella. If you take the right-wing coalition in Italy, Berlusconi manages to keep one team together including Bossi and his separatists, Fini's far-right party, the Christian-Democrats and his party... Labour needs to cultivate a hegemonic bloc. It cannot afford to alienate certain people away from the party. We have to converge on our ideas and find a middle road."
10 August 2003, MaltaToday

Alex Sciberras
MLP candidate on 9th district

On his more 'rebellious' days
"The time I spent in Graffiti and Alternattiva Demokratika was a time of political education because in these organisations ideology is given great importance."
17 February 2008, Illum

On tax cuts
"I am annoyed when politics is reduced to pandering for votes through tax cuts. As a party we have for a long time spoke on the need to reduce the surcharge and the need to remove taxes on overtime. These are aimed at giving a breathing space to families who were burdened with taxes. But the PN has only proposed a substantial decrease in income tax during the electoral campaign"

Victor Galea
AN candidate for Gozo

On house visits in Gozo
"Wednesday: I dedicated this day to home visits. At one point, we noticed a car following us while in Kerzem. The people in the car thought that I am stupid. Of course I realised that one of the men was calling people via his mobile instructing families not to open the door. This was confirmed later by three families excusing themselves for not opening since they are 'afraid' from the three men in the car. How funny. The three men in the car were helping me acquire some new votes. These tactics are of old... and self-destructive. When will these people learn?"
<http://victorgalea.blogspot.com>

Angelo Xuereb
AN candidate on 11th and 12th districts

On the extension of development boundaries
"Yes, I agree that after a lapse of around 15 years and in the absence of approval of most of the Local Plans, the building zones had to be reconsidered and increased... This, in return will help reduce the pressure on property prices, which are ever increasing. I have not gone through all these additions, but from what I understand, these additional parcels of land are relatively small and are located on the periphery of the existing development zones."
21 May 2006, MaltaToday

On his humble origins
"I started off 25 years ago from very modest beginnings... My first contract was of some Lm200, laying curbs along a pavement in Balzan, employing just two workers. I remember how at the time I didn't have enough money to pay them for more than two weeks at a stretch but I was very determined to be successful, I think that construction was in my blood and I wanted to make a name for myself."
6 December 2000, The Business Times

On the value of agriculture
"Agriculture only contributes two per cent to the economy while tourism generates 40 per cent. It is obvious which is most important of the two. It's all about priorities and it's not as if I am going to be the sole beneficiary. The nation would be better off if this (the Verdala golf course) had to be implemented."
17 November 2002, MaltaToday

On importing foreign workers
"The building industry needs skilled labourers, not people who can't even sweep a floor. We have managed to get foreigners from Yugoslavia, Pakistan and India, but permits for skilled labour are still difficult to obtain."
9 September 2007, MaltaToday

brings to bear."
1 June 2007, The Times

On his 'first time'
"The first time I voted AD was in the MEPs' election"
12 December 2006, MaltaToday

Victor Galea
AN candidate for Gozo

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9 September 2007, MaltaToday

Health WARNING Vote Gonzi and pay for health care.

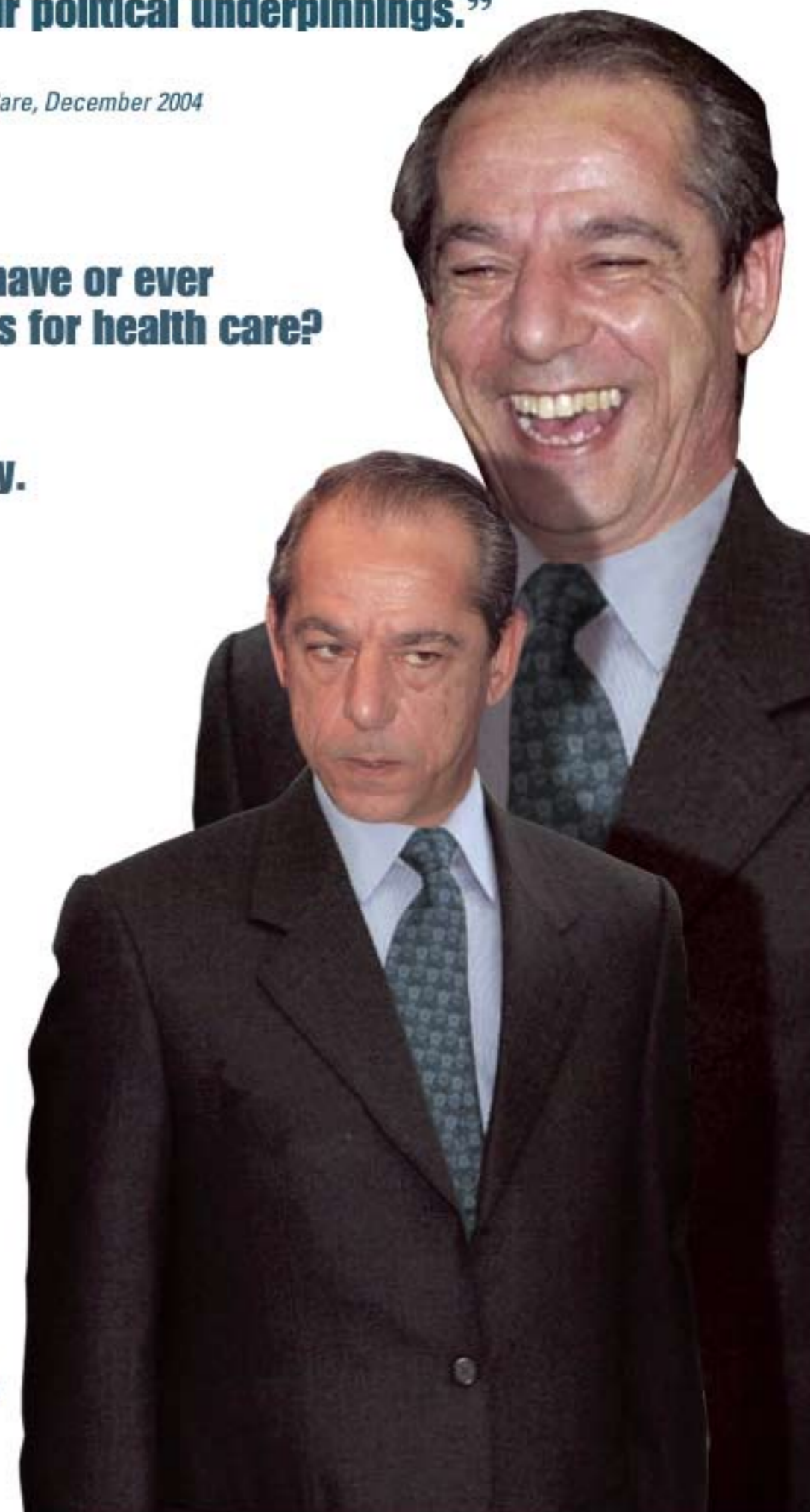
"The Cabinet has agreed in principle to this concept, but fees for Maltese citizens will not be introduced for the moment due to their political underpinnings."

Health Financing Reform Policy Proposal, Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care, December 2004

One News:
Can you exclude that you have or ever had plans to introduce fees for health care?

Lawrence Gonzi:
Yes, I exclude it completely.

One News, 11 February 2008



Labour. The only way.

Labour beats PN on cost of living

JAMES DEBONO

LABOUR has registered a slight advantage over the Nationalist on cost of living concerns, the primary concern of the Mal-

TOP 5 CONCERNS (%)

Cost of living	24.7
Lack of work	6.4
Surcharge	5.2
Environment	4.4
Corruption	3.6

WHICH PARTY HAS THE BEST POLICY ON INFLATION? (%)

MLP	39
PN	38
AD	1.1
AN	0.9
None	7.2
Don't know	13
No reply	0.8

tese according to MaltaToday's surveys which were carried out during the past year.

Labour is considered as the party with the best policy on inflation despite trailing the PN by 5% in the last survey conducted by MaltaToday.

But the same survey showed the PN losing 7.6% of its 2003 vote to the MLP – a clear indication that former Nationalist voters are over-represented in the sample of the survey.

The Labour Party instead has been harping on the cost of living issue for the past years. Its promise to reduce the surcharge by 50% is aimed at leaving more money in people's pockets.

Yet during this campaign the MLP has shied away from anachronistic solutions to con-

trol prices. The MLP also promises to control the cost of living but only by "strengthening mechanisms controlling abuses in the free market" – showing an ideological shift from old Labour's policy of price controls, to a modern mechanism aimed at protecting the consumer while retaining the benefits of choice.

Significantly Labour promises "to scrutinise private and public monopolies, duopolies and oligopolies." Yet it falls short of saying which sectors should be liberalised.

On its part the PN has promised to control the prices of medicines and to help families suffering from extraordinary medical costs which are not covered by the health system.



It also promised to set up an agency which would continue the work commenced by the National Committee for the Euro Changeover, which would

issue fair deal certificates to businessmen who respect consumer rights.

The survey also confirms that the electorate still looks up to the big parties to address bread and butter issues like the cost of living. On its part Alternattiva Demokratika has focused on the liberalisation of monopolies to ensure better prices for consumers.

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BEST POLICY ON INFLATION, BY AGE GROUP (%)

	MLP	PN	AD	AN	NONE	NO ANSWER
18-34	40.4	35.3	1.3	1.3	6.4	15.4
35-54	36	36	1.2	0.9	10	15.8
55	39.5	42.7	0.7	0	4	13

Jose Herrera 1st District



G. Mangia

Valletta

Hamrun

Pieta

Floriana

Part of Marsa/
St. Venera

Sant questions Times, Independent's editorial stand



Sant scandalised by "corruption in our DNA" comment

LABOUR leader Alfred Sant yesterday questioned once again The Sunday Times and The Malta Independent on Sunday's editorial stands in view of his latest revelation about Nationalist candidate Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando.

Speaking on Simone Cini's programme Il-Hadd ma' l-Ahbar broadcast on One TV, Sant said he expected The Sunday Times editor to acknowledge the evidence now laid in front of him detailing cases of corruption after the newspaper took him to task last week to present facts when speaking of corruption.

"We have a whole package about this (Pullicino Orlando's Mistra Bay development) and I expected him (the editor) to say something about it now," Sant said.

But The Sunday Times yesterday took the opposite direction in slamming Sant's "mantra" that the country needs change.

"Yet again, he is wrong," the editorial stated. "What Malta needs is a leader who can consolidate the achievements to date, and then move forward by taking the right decisions. Dr Gonzi is the

only man up to that task." Sant was also critical of The Malta Independent on Sunday's editorial which said "corruption is part of the national DNA", saying this was insulting to the Maltese.

"We are a Mediterranean people," the editorial said. "And our ethical standards are unfortunately not those what are reputed to be in northern European countries."

Sant rebutted: "Well, I'm Mediterranean and I don't have corruption in my DNA. We have been calling on Dr Gonzi to enact the Whistleblowers' Act but he didn't. Does this have anything to do with being Mediterranean?"

Asked by Cini about the issues that did not make it into this electoral campaign, Sant referred to gay rights, ethnic minorities and animal rights.

"You know, in an election campaign there is a narrow range of issues that take precedence, but the people talk about other concerns too and it's important we discuss them," he said.

Tearful Pullicino Orlando insists on withdrawal of Mistra application

NATIONALIST backbencher Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando yesterday wept openly at a meeting in Mosta, as he denied any personal connection with the application to develop a 2,000 square metre nightclub on his own land in Mistra valley.

Moved by the roaring applause of PN supporters, Pullicino Orlando broke into tears and excused himself for "being emotional". His voice breaking, Pullicino Orlando said he could empathise with those who fell victim to the accusations from the Labour party.

"I've been running after Sant for three days, to see if he would face me so that I rebut his allegations," Pullicino Orlando said, suddenly breaking into anger.

"People close to Sant told me they were disgusted by the allegations their leader was about to say. I will defend my name on any public medium and face Alfred Sant. The most important thing at this point for me is to clear my

name and that is why I followed him around to face him. I have spoken to the lessee of my land, and I insisted with him to speak to that applicant to stop this application immediately."

Labour leader Alfred Sant revealed details of the case at a press conference on site at Mistra on Saturday – his third attempt to associate Pullicino Orlando with the development, after the Nationalist MP had shadowed him for three days – describing MEP's decision to grant an outline development permit for the club, in defiance of its own case officer's recommendation, as a classic case of corruption.

"This is a scandal. This is an obscenity. This is utter corruption," the Labour leader charged on Saturday. "What is more scandalous is that this site is the property of Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando."

The owner of the land is De Rohan Antiques Limited, which in

2001 became wholly owned by Pullicino Orlando.

An emotional Pullicino Orlando rebutted these allegations yesterday, wiping tears from his eyes as he explained that the land in question had been rented out to a third party, and that he himself knew nothing about the development application as revealed by Alfred Sant.

Passing from tears to rage in a matter of seconds, Pullicino also delivered a scathing counter-attack of his own, describing Sant's press-conference as "cowardly" and "typical mudslinging", and adding, to huge applause from those present, that he has already called on the applicant to withdraw the application. He also challenged Sant to a face to face debate.

Pullicino Orlando's history with Mistra goes back almost exactly a decade. In 1998, he obtained a permit to restore a room on the land with the condition that

"The most important thing at this point for me is to clear my name" - Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando

he would only use that room to store agricultural tools. In July of the same year, Pullicino Orlando declared that he was a part-time farmer; but on two separate occasions in 1999, MEPA turned down his application for a reservoir.

In October 2005, a third party applied for a permit, this time to build a nightclub on 2,000 square metres with a capacity of 4,000 people on the site.

In March 2006, the MEPA Planning Directorate recommended refusal, because the land was ODZ and earmarked as a Natura 2000 site by the EU among other reasons.

However, in November 2007, DCC A – the same board which resigned last Wednesday, after the release of an indicting MEPA internal audit officer report on an illegal development permit to Charles Polidano – issued the permit following a positive recommendation by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA).



They made him cry - Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando does a bawler in Mosta yesterday morning, in the aftermath of Labour accusations over an open-air disco permit issued for his land. The MP yesterday said he would ask for the revocation of the permit.

Mangion and Vella sue Pullicino Orlando for libel

MATTHEW VELLA

LABOUR MPs Charles Mangion and Karmenu Vella issued a statement late last evening at 11.30pm to counter Nationalist accusations of having submitted false accounts to the financial authorities, saying they declared eight years of income after reaching a tax agreement with the inland revenue department in 2003.

Reiterating a "categorical denial" of not having declared income from their company Mirca Properties Ltd "for tax purposes", the two MPs however admitted not having declared their income from rents for eight years between 1995 and 2002 before reaching an agreement with tax authorities.

They said that all undeclared income between 1995 and 2002

"was in fact declared in its entirety in audited accounts presented to the MFSA and the returns to the income tax departments for 2003 and 2004."

They said the IRD was aware of this, after years of discussions with the department of how these declarations would take place. "During these discussions, it was explained to the department what the circumstances of the company were," Mangion and Vella said, without going into any detail of these circumstances.

"The result was an agreement with the IRD to declare all this income for the years 2003 and 2004... this can all be verified in the accounts presented to the MFSA which are available to the public. It is therefore clear that there was no tax evasion."

The two MPs accused the PN of generating "rumours" with the intention of deflecting at-

tention of accusations levelled at Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando over the Mistra open-air disco case.

The Nationalist Party yesterday revealed accounts related to Mirca Properties, the company owned by Vella and Labour deputy leader Charles Mangion, claiming they never declared any income for eight years.

In response to the press release issued earlier by Mangion and Vella, the PN said that as directors of Mirca Properties, they presented to the MFSA "false declarations".

Mangion and Vella have filed libel proceedings against Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, accusing him of having lied. "We are suing him for libel due for attributing defamatory comments in our regards. We're not saying we didn't receive rents. We did. Pullicino Orlando is alleging we

never declared the income from the rents for tax purposes. If he made his investigations he would have noted that we submitted these rents to the Commissioner for Inland Revenue," Vella told MaltaToday yesterday.

In a statement signed by PN secretary-general Joe Saliba, the PN said that Mangion and Vella had declared that their company did not have any income from properties while in reality, they had earned Lm100,000 from the rental of three apartments to the Malta Freeport. "They sent false declarations for eight years in succession," the PN claimed.

Mangion and Vella, as directors of Mirca Properties Limited, until 2002 failed to declare the earnings that the company made. These payments were made with cheques that were cashed and pocketed without being declared to the MFSA in the company's

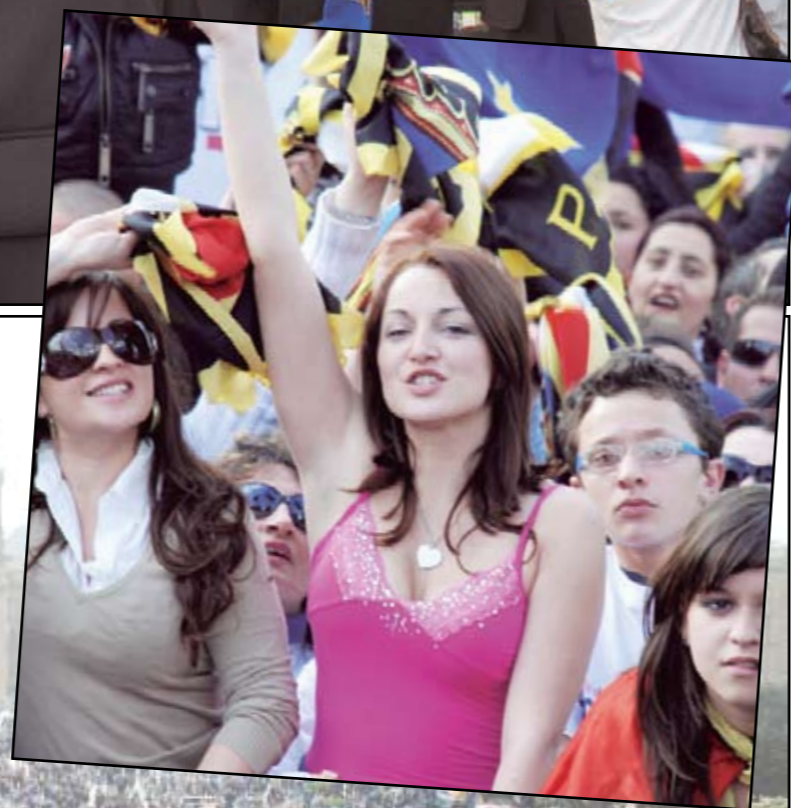
accounts.

Taking a leaf from the MLP's copybook, the PN published three documents in support of their claims. The first document was a copy of a contract between Mirca Properties and the Malta Freeport in 1995 to rent three apartments to the corporation. The contracts were signed by Mangion and Vella on behalf of the company. The average yearly income from each apartment ranged from Lm8,001 to Lm12,060.

The second document is a copy of cheques that were paid to Mirca Properties Limited by the Malta Freeport and which were cashed by Mangion and Vella.

The third is a copy of the MFSA accounts for Mirca Properties Limited which show that until 2002, the company had not made any income.

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Thousands of Nationalists turned up in full force at the Granaries of Floriana to hear Lawrence Gonzi's reasons to vote PN next Saturday

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA

Every vote as precious as gold

JULIA FARRUGIA

PRIME Minister Lawrence Gonzi yesterday advised thousands of Nationalist supporters at the Floriana Granaries to "cast their vote for that party with the highest ambitions."

In an address which was largely a repetition of speeches made during the week, Lawrence Gonzi invited people to look at the roads which were inaugurated thanks to the EU, to look at the record levels of investment, and to see with their eyes the factories which opened under his administration.

"It was the PN's policies which brought this wealth," insisted Gonzi. "Four years ago I invited you to judge us on what we attain; we told you that we had huge ambitions. And we succeeded in reaching this stage."

Stressing that the Labour Party is weak in its vision, PN leader said that "on Saturday people need decide whether they want a party that has no trust whatsoever in the Maltese."

Repeating what he said on Saturday in Birgu, Lawrence Gonzi declared that "the choice is whether we want to be chased by work or whether the other way round."

Then Lawrence Gonzi stated that "on 8 March people need to choose that party who has the greatest ambitions, and not someone who wants to open a salt factory or give our children an extra year at school."

Stressing his credentials as a tried and tested manager, Gonzi warned that this election was about choosing the best leader for the country. "We need to

choose a person who is capable," insisted Gonzi. "During the past four weeks the Malta Labour Party did nothing but throw mud."

Contrary to what many people were expecting, the Prime Minister stopped short of openly defending his backbencher Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando who just 24 hours earlier was tagged by the Malta Labour Party as the "new PN face involved in a huge environmental scandal in a Mistra development."

But while he criticized Alfred Sant for throwing mud, Gonzi made no reference whatsoever to this case.

After the first 20 minutes of his speech, Lawrence Gonzi starting regaining his usual confidence, and slated Alfred Sant's performance when Prime Minister 10 years ago.

"We don't need any tweaking (tbazwir). We don't want you. And on the 8th of March we are going to tell you NO!" roared Gonzi, getting the biggest applause so far.

An adamant Lawrence Gonzi said that on 8 March, the people's choice will favour he who strengthens the economy. "We don't need the one who had only one solution: devaluating the lira by 10%."

The Prime Minister reiterated his pledge to create 5,000 jobs yearly, reminding people of Alfred Sant's promise to only create 2,000 jobs a year. Gonzi warned people that having Sant as Prime Minister will mean 3,000 unemployed people every year.

The PN leader reminded his audience that under Sant's administration, 33 new taxes were introduced including a tax on every medicine.

Defending himself from only one MLP attack, Lawrence Gonzi said that Alfred Sant can get him as many health reports as he wants.

"Do you want me to give you half a dozen health reports? I can have 12 reports. What counts is what I implement. Judge me on what I do," challenged Gonzi.

The Prime Minister went back to his 8 March focus, this time saying that the electorate will choose between stability and uncertainty derived from a party who in four years did not come up with one good solution.

Clearly targeting voters who in the past election chose PN because of the EU issue, Lawrence Gonzi stressed the fact that on Saturday Malta will be celebrating its fifth EU anniversary.

"Where are the Sicilians who took your jobs? Where are the foreigners that took work away from the Maltese?" asked Gonzi, referring to Labour's old pre-

referendum scare tactics.

"Don't you forget that five years ago the Labour Party deceived you," the PN leader said. "How can we now trust someone who only a few days ago stated that he has no regrets that he wanted us to stay out of the EU?"

Gonzi quoted from his own track record, insisting that despite numerous challenges such as the oil price hike, Malta attained a 4% economical growth, lowered its deficit and attracted big investments such as Lufthansa Technik and Smart City.

Whilst pointing out that tourism reached the best results ever, Gonzi insisted: "we all deserve that in August we're back on the Fosos and enjoy ourselves."

Lawrence Gonzi was referring to the Isle of MTV concert held last year on the Granaries. Only a few days ago the Government announced that he sealed a three-year contract to get again the Isle of MTV in Malta.

"Saturday is not just a one-day occasion. During those few seconds when you're holding that pencil you have the entire country in your hand. Be careful! Don't take anything for granted as we have already proof of this!"

All Gonzi's energy was reserved for the last 10 minutes of his speech. Constantly questioning Sant, Lawrence Gonzi asked why the MLP leader is already giving up when it comes to tackling economical issues.

"I accuse the Malta Labour Party that, already from the Opposition, he is holding back and admitting that they have given up on keeping finances in shape," thundered Gonzi.

He asked Alfred Sant why he is insisting on halving the surcharge when this will "create a huge hole in the country's finances."

"And why does Alfred Sant want to worry factory workers, when shedding doubt on their overtime payment? Why does Alfred Sant want to worry those who are keen on environment when he comes up with statements saying that he wants to create a golf course in Maghtab? Who is giving you this kind of advice?" asked Lawrence Gonzi.

"Why is Alfred Sant worrying parents? Parents don't know what's going to happen with the future of their kids!"

Gonzi highlighted other PN electoral promises, including more work and better work, tax cuts, more incentives for women to start working, a revision of the car registration tax and to completely abolish the tax on residential inheritance.

Lawrence Gonzi referred to the PN's election song "Dan hu l-mument", stating that this is

the moment wherein the electoral needs to be united and choose a PN government.

And again came Gonzi's piece of advice.

"Every single vote is as precious as gold. One single vote can make a difference," warning people not to be tempted to

experiment with the coalition issue. "We can look at what happened in other countries very close to Malta," advised the PN leader.

"Tonight when you're on way home, be the ambassadors. In the streets, in the shops... run after every single vote."

HIGH POINTS

- Gonzi's smartest move was to individually target people who previously voted PN because of the EU issue. Gonzi fully knows that these voters are crucial, but polls suggest that PN did not manage to keep all YES voters in the referendum.
- Thanks for keeping it short... 1hr 16min is far more better than Sliema's 1hr 35 min timing.
- As in previous mass meetings, all PN candidates were called one by one on stage. Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando got the biggest applause. This will contain the damage to the candidate's image, at least among Nationalists who could have very easily been put off by the MLP's latest electoral bomb.

LOW POINTS

- From his appearance on stage, Gonzi failed to show confidence and energy. His facial expressions gave him away. Gone was the radiant natural smile and he looked somewhat tired and not geared up for his speech.
- Highlighting tourism successes, Gonzi could have easily done without the Isle of MTV allusion. Yes it was a good concert but please don't make it sound as if we would be deprived of entertainment without the PN in power.
- No mention at all of major concerns affecting thousands of people, such as spring hunting and MEPA. And no reaction to the Mistra 'scandal' recently exposed by the MLP.

Josie talks of parties' monkey business

Reiterates AN's stance on hunting, immigration and family issues



PHOTOGRAPH BY THERESE DEBONO

DAVID DARMANIN

AT a press conference organised at Parliament square yesterday, a formally dressed Azzjoni Nazzjonali leader Josie Muscat delivered a 45-minute speech alleging "monkey business" taking place in government circles.

He also insisted on his party's vision on immigration and family issues, and while at it, criticised the media for revealing stories about four of his candidates and their brushes with the law.

"We have two parties talking about zero tolerance and transparency," he said, while also pushing for the introduction of a whistleblower act.

"On television, I recently called on the political parties to publish their accounts," he said, while not mentioning the name of the party in question, he referred to a 2004 news report revealing a party's Lm2 million in dues and unpaid social security and Lm360,000 in unpaid VAT. "I do not want to mention the name of the party because I know that both Labour and PN have unpaid dues with the social security and

VAT departments."

"If the political parties fail to publish their accounts by March 8, it would mean that all their talk on zero tolerance and transparency is gratuitous," he claimed.

Describing the MIDI project on Tigné Point as a "fat scandal", Muscat held both the government and the opposition responsible for the controversial changes made to the original tender specifications. "It is useless for the company involved to defend government. Now it also transpires that the stamp duty on contracts have not even been paid," he said.

Fuming, Muscat accused the government of under-selling the land on Manoel Island and Tigné: "As if that land is worth Lm1 million. It could have been sold at Lm10 billion – enough to clear our national debt. This country is run by amateurs," he said.

Turning his guns to the media, previously dubbing them "pea-brained" in a public event last week, Muscat stated: "The newspapers would much rather investigate a candidate who is still innocent. They never investigate such matters."

On Sunday 24 February,

If the political parties fail to publish their accounts by March 8, it would mean that all their talk on zero tolerance and transparency is gratuitous

MaltaToday revealed that two of AN's candidates were facing criminal charges in court, while another had a criminal record. AN deputy leader Anglu Xuereb owes the government over €3.5 million for the Verdala Hotel, in Rabat.

"We gave out 500 tumoli of land to SmartCity. And what do they have to pay? Lm200,000 – for Maltese land that is now in the hands of foreigners. The minister said that with SmartCity, they adopted the same model as Tigné Point. Will that mean that specifications will be changed in this case too?"

Slating the project for earmarking a mere 19 percent of the land for IT business, Muscat said: "otherwise it's all real estate and hotels."

"But the newspapers don't see this. The newspapers will only look into the life of someone who made mistakes when he was 15, and judge him guilty for all his life."

Candidate Pierre Cutajar, who has a criminal record, was also present for the press conference.

Muscat also reiterated AN's stance on immigration, specifying that he is committed to

provide shelter, social security and employment to whoever enters Malta legally. However, he qualified that: "AN does not agree that rights given to Maltese citizenship should be also given to those who enter Malta illegally," specifying that taxpayers are being passed on a wrong message once state funds are being spent on asylum seekers.

On employment of foreign personnel, Muscat said that if need be, Malta is to apply for such human resources.

The EU border agency Frontex was described by Muscat as "a mockery", on the grounds that it does not have "the power to send anyone back".

On family issues, the far-right leader stated: "They told us that there are different forms of families. What a joke. AN is in favour of the traditional family."

Explaining that his party never found difficulty speaking its mind, Muscat mentioned the stance AN took on the issue of spring hunting. "We spoke in favour of hunters," he said, "irrespective of what the EU says."

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AD retaliates: you need a tough stomach to do politics in Malta

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika (AD) Chairperson Harry Vassallo insisted yesterday that his party was not afraid of saying the truth, even to the Nationalist Party and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.

Speaking during a meeting for party activists and supporters at the Vivaldi Hotel in Sliema yesterday morning, Vassallo said: "There was somebody who said that he will find it very difficult to form a coalition with AD because we were a bit rude and we criticised him. We hurt him, poor guy, because he is very sensitive... I think the person who raised these objections and has discovered all this sensitivity, forgot that the Constitution was changed twice unfavourably towards AD," Vassallo insisted.

The Green Party chairperson said Gonzi had forgotten that for many of AD's earlier years, "we were not given space not even on that misery of BA political broadcasts. We had to file a case in front of the Constitutional Court to be recognised as a political party under the law and be allowed access to the titbit of political broadcasts that is allowed every year by the BA, and after we won that case we were allotted a misery of 10 minutes a year!" Vassallo complained.

He said this had been the party's experience of the past 18 years. "You need a tough stomach to renew your democratic will to lead to the achievement of dialogue. This is only possible thanks to AD and not some other party," he said to roaring applause.

"If the other parties had to experience a titbit of what they saddle us with year after year, Malta would have lit up with their wrath and blood would have shed again," Vassallo warned.

Vassallo said it was thanks to AD that blood had not been spilt as the party took blow after blow, year after year, one prejudice after the other, "the stifling of our voice, and doing every kind of thing possible. The thing that hurts me most, though, is that that they do not respect us," Vassallo said.

Recalling one of the party's earlier slogans, "Ir-Raguni ma Tridx Forza" ("Reason does not need force"), Vassallo said that AD did not need to win a majority in order to push forward its agenda.

"We do not need to dominate this country in order to change it. We do not have to be on our own in government to enact our



PHOTOGRAPH BY THERESE DEBONO

Even though Pullicino Orlando is a rival in another party, one is nonetheless disappointed when all the credentials he had built are lost

programme. The programme of principles, of culture – the cultural change in our politics – will be implemented even if AD has a single representative in Parliament, let alone if we have two, three, four, five representatives," he said to more applause.

Even the architecture of the House of Representatives reflects the two-party mindset. "Instead of making it a semi-circle, because people move from one party to the other, in Malta we built a Chamber with two sides. It was for this reason that when Dr Fenech Adami asked us not to consist the last general elections, offering us the post of Speaker as a sort of referee," he said.

Referring to the Mistra case, Vassallo said: "I will not comment about the case, because somebody else has already made

the necessary feast out of it. The comment which struck me was the disappointment, because even though Pullicino Orlando is a rival in another party, one is nonetheless disappointed when all the credentials he had built – because I respect him for his work against the construction of a cement plant at Siggiewi and the construction of a dump next to Mnajdra temples, and I will not forget that – are lost. I feel sorry on his behalf. Despite the fact that he is in another political party, Malta has lost," he said.

Vassallo said the hasty appointment of a new DCC board a few days before the general elections (when they have to tender their resignation anyway) "because there are a few permits still to be passed" was shameful.

He said AD was in contact with the German Green Party Die Grunen so that they could inform the German supermarket chain Lidl of the development. "This permit, which should have never been issued but with a miracle, against all recommendations by the MEPA technical staff, somehow was issued, and now MEPA cannot withdraw it," Vassallo explained.

Vassallo said the development should be stopped by the mother company itself, since Lidl were meant to run the new supermarket and this company gave a lot of importance to corporate social responsibility. "In Malta it seems that not even the PM has any power over Ic-Caqnu," he concluded.

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Sant claims he has documents detailing corruption

KARL SCHEMBRI

CLAIMING he has "other documents" in hand related to Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando's Mistra Bay development case, Labour leader Alfred Sant yesterday slammed Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi for not enacting the Whistleblower Act.

"I will keep making this scandal public," Sant told the thousands of party supporters gathered at the Luxol Ground in Pembroke for the fourth mass meeting in this electoral campaign. "And we have other documents which we can't issue because we will be putting those who gave us the information under threat, because Gonzi hasn't yet enacted the Whistleblower Act."

As the clouds gathered over the jam-packed grounds and the wind grew stronger, Sant challenged Pullicino Orlando to admit he was just stopped short of "getting into a corruption scandal" only because he was exposed by Labour.

The MLP leader based a good part of his speech on Labour's latest revelation about Pullicino Orlando's land in Mistra Bay, which despite being an ecological site was about to be turned into a massive disco venue.

Wrongly referring to the MP as Pullicino Orland, he lambasted the prime minister for "sending him" to Labour's press conferences instead of following his usual practice of sending people in the know about corruption cases to the police commissioner.

"Jeffrey Pullicino Orland said he went to speak to Lawrence Gonzi, so he knew about this case," Sant said. "And where did he sent him to? He sent him to me, while I was giving a press conference! Am I the police commissioner?"

Sant attacked the prime minister for defending Francis Zammit Dimech, Tonio Fenech, Ninu Zammit, George Pullicino, Austin Gatt, Louis Galea, and Censu Galea.

"He defended them all," Sant said. "Then he said he would remove them after the election and introduce new ministers. Yesterday we showed what the new ones are worth" – referring to Pullicino

Orlando. "Go to Mistra before it is destroyed by GonziPN!"

Sant also named the architect behind the Mistra application – Paul Camilleri – who is a cousin of Gonzi's and was given the Mater Dei plans evaluation tender by direct order, besides being an architect for the Smart City project.

"They say I'm engaged in mud slinging. Here are the documents," Sant reiterated. "This is no mud. Pullicino Orland said he didn't know to whom was renting his land, that he knew nothing about this development. Is there any idiot out there who believes this fairy tale? ... Pullicino Orland, who pretends he's the paladin of the environment, who was given a medal or whatever, now wants to destroy parts of the most beautiful environment areas. And between one sob and another, he tells us he did not know who was leasing his land. I say arrogance has gone beyond all limits."

Sant again pledged to remove tax on overtime in the next budget and to give back public holidays falling on weekends, and promised to cut down the contributions from pensioners living in government-run old peoples' homes from 85% of their total pension to 65%.

Holding up the health reform report he revealed last week, Sant said Gonzi remained "dumbstruck" when faced with the document written in 2004.

"GonziPN accepted the principle of payment for health," Sant claimed. "GonziPN lied. Whoever lies is a liar. GonziPN is a liar."

Sant said that on the contrary, Labour was the party that "told the truth".

"We're different; love us or hate us we tell the truth, we keep our promises," he said.

He said the public health service "will remain free for everyone".

Libels against Pullicino Orlando

Speaking earlier, Labour deputy leader for Parliamentary Affairs Charles Mangion said that, together with Labour MP Karmenu Vella he had sued Pullicino Orlando for alleging they had not

declared earnings on property they had rented out through a company they owned.

"He thought he'd cover his sins by coming out attacking me and 'il-Guy', Karmenu Vella," Mangion said. "Today at 2pm we've requested the court to open with urgency to sue him for libel. I have always declared everything and I presented all the documents proving this in court."

Making fun of Pullicino Orlando's profession as dentist who declares himself also as a farmer, Mangion said: "He's no longer pulling out teeth, he's now a part-time farmer, just like Louis Galea. ... He said he had no idea who he leased the land to. Is he out of his mind? If his mind is not there he shouldn't even be in parliament."

Mangion said "the last remaining weapon of GonziPN was lies, manipulation and deceit".

He said corruption was spread all around the country – from the Maritime Authority, to the Transport Authority, to Gozo.

The deputy leader for party affairs, Michael Falzon, referred to Barack Obama's slogan instead of starting off with singing football chants.

"Let me use a message that started off in America: Yes we can! Yes, we can bring change. Yes we will."

"Today I won't be singing because they got me on my own," he said referring to a satirical video, posted on YouTube, of him singing out of tune on the Granaries the previous Sunday. "You sing! Sing all of you together!"

Falzon said his party would give a facelift to the country. "Yesterday we went to Gozo and we were given this clear message: Gozo wants change."

He said in a week's time there will be no mass meeting but a Labour victory celebration.

"We'll give the pay-off to the Nationalist government ... They say they can't do anything about factories closing down; they say they can't do anything about corruption, they say they can't do anything about whole sectors failing badly ... so what do we need them for? Get out of the way! I appeal to you so that on Saturday you tell this tired and incompetent government to get

out. "How do they expect Magtab to blossom when they have poisoned all the country with corruption? Report after report

by Transparency International show that Nationalist government equals corruption. Malta will blossom, yes, but after 8 March."

HIGH POINTS

- Ready for the wind of change: Sant's wig remained in its place even though from the word go it showed all the signs it was about to fly off as soon as the Labour leader stepped onto the podium. The loose fringe kept up with the party's slogan, besides frightening Sant's coterie about the possible unmentionable, reminding everyone that the only way is up.

- "Am I the Police Commissioner?" Sant asked as he mocked Gonzi about his habit of sending whoever knows something about corruption to the police chief. He was referring to Pullicino Orlando who turned up for the Labour press conferences outside MEPA, in Gozo and at Mistra Bay.

- Spin Valley, The Western: That's how Sant referred to the disco that would have been built in Mistra Bay if the MEPA permit is granted. "Sounds like a western (movie)," he said about the name chosen for the entertainment venue meant to be built bang in the middle of an ecological site. Vintage Sant.

LOW POINTS

- Even if he was out of tune last week, everyone was expecting Michael Falzon to sing again yesterday. So when he announced he wasn't singing any longer he let everyone down. You can't do that Michael. Once you raise expectations, you have to deliver.

- Sant sounded somehow less upbeat than the previous Sunday yesterday, and the strong wind blowing in his face apparently contributed to his losing focus at times.

- Where are the lions? The wind striking Sant's microphone as he was speaking sounded as if Falzon's allegorical lions were about to be unleashed from underneath the stage. Thank God it was just the Luxol ground, not the Colosseum.



The girl in the inset must have known beforehand that Alfred Sant would describe the Mistra scandal as Spin Valley: The Western



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA





The last thing Malta needs now is a spanner in the works.

Things are going smoothly.

- » Record tourism figures
- » Record employment levels
- » Record foreign direct investment
- » Record numbers of young people at college and university
- » Record job creation
- » New work sectors booming
- » Money pouring into the country
- » Malta at the heart of Europe
- » Financial deficit slashed to almost nothing
- » Peace and prosperity at last

And then... a spanner in the works. A spanner called Alfred Sant. And it all begins to spin out of control again. Recession, soaring unemployment, axed investor confidence, fights with the EU, wars with students, rising cost of living, businesses shedding workers... and every evening, another nasty surprise on the evening news. It's not as though we don't already have a taste of things to come.

This isn't what you need, or what Malta deserves.

Think about it.
Better safe than sorry.

iva, fiimkien kollox possibbli
gonzipn

Stolen bike in accident leads to two arrests

A 17-year-old from Siggiewi was yesterday apprehended by police as he attempted to run away from the scene of a road accident, with another youth arrested in connection with the theft of a motorbike. The accident happened Sunday morning at 2:30am at St George's bay, in St Julian's.

No one was injured, but as policemen approached the scene, the motorcyclist was seen running away. He was given chase and arrested. Investigations showed the motorcycle had been stolen some time earlier. A 19-year-old was also arrested in connection with the case.

Child migrants' monument inaugurated



A Maltese Child Migrants' Monument was inaugurated at the Valletta Waterfront yesterday. The monument, in the shape of a child's paper boat, recalls the migration of many Maltese children to Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, in conditions which at times ended up in abuse for the children. 310 children left Malta for Australia between 1950 and 1965. Most of the migrants' ships left from the quay where the monument is located. In his speech, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said the monument was a reminder of Maltese children's migration between 1950 and 1965 to Australia. "They left for a better life. Economic conditions in our

country were not easy... and many of them found fortune and success in Australia. We want to show the high esteem in which we hold them with this monument." Gonzi also turned to the fate of children whose vicissitudes were not as lucky as others' – a dark part of this chapter which often ended with harsh conditions for children under the custody of religious groups, who were sexually and physically abused. "The intention behind the migration of these children was a right one, but the consequences were not always those intended. We are sorry for those who suffered. We hope that this monument will help them close those wounds which are still open."

ELECTION SPECIAL
maltatoday

HYPE SU
MILITANTS SQUARELY BEAT HELP ON ENVIRONMENT...
CHECK IT OUT

59%
SUPPORTS BIRTH PM WOULD HELP...
49% OF THOSE SUPPORTING...
CHECK IT OUT

ALL OUT WAR
GONZI HITS BACK AT SANT WITH LABELS
Labour accuses PN on corruption issue
CHECK IT OUT

ON SALE TOMORROW - DON'T MISS OUT



maltatoday Editorial

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Never mind corruption: the issue is the environment

LAST week, after much farcical suspense, Labour leader Alfred Sant finally dropped his "bombshell" on Nationalist candidate Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando. Sant revealed how Pullicino Orlando was the owner of a large swathe of land in an environmentally and agriculturally sensitive area of Malta: Mistra valley, which for decades has been synonymous with the ongoing struggle to protect our countryside from rampant overdevelopment. He also supplied a dossier showing how MEPA had issued a development permit to build a 2,000 square metre nightclub on the same land owned by Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando. The application was filed by a third party – the person to whom Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando rented the land – in October 2005. With elections next Saturday, the revelation is damaging to the ruling party, and more so to Pullicino Orlando: a Nationalist MP who has made a name for himself championing green causes. However, we must be mindful of the fact that politics tend to skew perceptions at the best of times. At the height of an electoral campaign, the real issues at stake are very quickly overshadowed by partisan interests. On one level, both Sant's onslaught and Pullicino Orlando's retaliation on

Saturday – when he revealed the fact that Labour MPs Karmenu Vella and Charles Mangion had not declared their income from a property company – are themselves a reflection of the sorry state Maltese politics have reached. It seems the issue immediately descended into an unsightly spectacle of mudslinging. Starting with Alfred Sant, who was quick to jump to the conclusion that Pullicino Orlando's role in the affair was pivotal to the permit being given; as well as his subsequent accusation of "corruption", without supplying any evidence that money had indeed changed hands for the permit. Even AD, regrettably, appears to have been quick to jump on the bandwagon of political innuendo in this case. As this newspaper has pointed out before, Alfred Sant is altogether too trigger-happy when it comes to the corruption claim. But equally petty was the PN's immediate knee-jerk reaction to accuse the above-mentioned Labour MPs of failing to declare their income from Mirca Properties Ltd for eight years. This is a serious accusation which warrants proper investigation in its own right... but it does nothing at all to neutralise the seriousness of the allegations leveled at the PN's candidate from Siggiewi.

But the real issue – that is, the possibility of yet another environmental disaster in the making – has been ignored. Let us be honest here: regardless of the identity of those involved, the revelation of a permit for development in Mistra every inch as serious a threat to the environment as the Ramla l-Hamra case last year, or even the ODZ extension in 2006. One assumes, then, that it is only proximity to the election that has silenced what would otherwise almost certainly have been a vociferous howl of protest from the environmental lobby. As things stand, there is only one silver lining in all this. Speaking yesterday in Mosta, a tearful Pullicino Orlando promised that he would not allow this development to take place. At face value, this should halt the project in its tracks. For as is widely known, MEPA does not take into consideration ownership issues when deciding on such permits. With the rightful owner now publicly declaring his opposition to the project, there should be no difficulty in retracting the permit once and for all. To this end, Pullicino Orlando would be well-advised to register his objection with MEPA immediately... ideally before next Saturday, as after an election it is not unheard of for politicians to suddenly reappraise their former in-

tentions. As for the corruption charge, much more proof will be required before Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando can be said to have acted illegally or even dishonestly in the issue. But nonetheless, the same parliamentarian has a lot of answering to do. He still has to provide a plausible explanation for the claim that he had rented out such environmentally sensitive land out to person/s he never met, or knew anything about, without any knowledge of their intention. Likewise, he will have to work hard to convince the public that he was entirely ignorant of a permit application process, undertaken by third parties to develop his own land, which dates back more than two years. Even if Pullicino Orlando provides satisfactory answers to all these questions, his green credentials will still be doubted. For another question also arises as a matter of course: if Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando is incapable of protecting the natural and cultural heritage on his own land, how can he be taken seriously when he promises to protect our national cultural heritage through his work as a parliamentarian? Hardly surprising, then, that he would burst into tears while trying to protest his innocence live on NET TV.

Floriana, Dingli, make it to FA Cup quarter finals

FLORIANA defeated Senglea Athletic 3-2, earning a place in the quarter finals of the FA Cup after coming up from behind and getting the winner in extra time.

Floriana's Krsteski and Agius were given red cards while Senglea's Mifsud was also sent off.

Senglea had been leading 2-1 against a nine-man Floriana, when with seconds to go to the final whistle, Yala Bolasie scored a hard and low equaliser into Senglea's goal to equalise.

Ewurun opened the score for Senglea on 40 minutes and Caruana equalised in the middle of the second half. Tanti

made it two for Senglea with 10 minutes to go and the first division side were preparing to celebrate an upset when Bola-

sie equalised in injury time and Cassara made it three for Floriana from a penalty near the end of extra time.

First Division side Dingli Swallows also made it to the quarter finals when they beat Premier division side Mqabba 1-0.

Serie A results - Inter lose

A Pablo Osvaldo goal gave Fiorentina a 3-2 win at third-placed Juventus lifting them to within a point of the Turin side in the Serie A. Substitute Osvaldo was sent off for a second yellow card for waving his shirt in celebration. Juve stay third with 48 points from 26 games, 13 behind leaders Inter, who take on Napoli away later on Sunday.

AS Roma trail Inter by six points in second after thrashing Parma 4-0 on Saturday.

Cagliari boosted their hopes of avoiding the drop with a 2-1 win over Genoa.

RESULTS: Cagliari 2 Genoa 1; Empoli 0 Siena 2; Juventus 2 Fiorentina 3; Livorno 1 Catania 0; Reggina 0 Palermo 0; Sampdoria 2 Torino 2; Udinese 2 Atalanta 0

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Pursuits

Sudoku

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

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.

Yesterday's solution

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	8		9		10		11	
12				13				
			14					
	15	16			17	18		
19				20		21		
			23			24		
26		26			27	28		29
				30				31
32		33				34		
				35				36
38						39		

Answers to the MaltaToday crossword will be published tomorrow

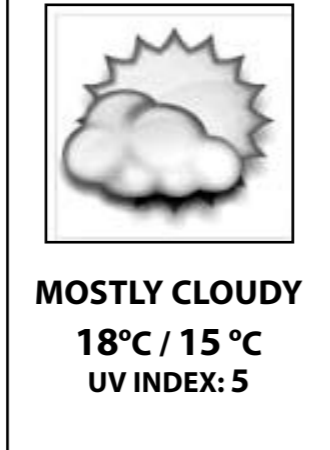
Across

- 1. Niggle (7)
- 8. Clairvoyant (7)
- 8. Shaped like a rectangle (11)
- 12. Chamber (4)
- 13. Be sorry for (4)
- 14. Tartan (5)
- 15. Safe (6)
- 17. Last letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
- 22. Lean (4)
- 23. Footwear (5)
- 24. Native of Thailand (4)
- 25. Stories (5)
- 28. Period of the year (6)
- 30. Rotates (5)
- 32. Highway (4)
- 34. Harden by heat (4)
- 35. Wheel for propelling a ship (6,5)
- 38. Assembly (7)
- 39. Engage in wrestling (7)

Down

- 1. Approaches (5)
- 2. Composition verse (4)
- 3. Small domesticated carnivore (3)
- 5. Former coin of France (3)
- 6. Fellow (4)
- 7. Hard-shelled pupa (9)
- 8. Part of verb to ride (4)
- 9. Wheel shaft (4)
- 10. Broad smile (4)
- 11. Religious practice (4)
- 14. Squeeze (5)
- 16. Slender boat (5)
- 18. Mathematics (5)
- 19. Private room on a ship (9)
- 20. Happiness (3)
- 21. Remains of a fire (5)
- 26. Jump (4)
- 27. Knitting stitch (4)
- 28. Frozen water vapour (4)
- 29. Gemstone (4)
- 31. Flat shelf (5)
- 33. Slender missile (4)
- 34. Wagers (4)
- 36. Lair (3)
- 37. Pronoun (3)

Today's Weather



WARNINGS: Nil

WEATHER: A low pressure area covers most of the Mediterranean sea as a weak anticyclone over the Gulf of Sirte extends towards the central Mediterranean sea.

VISIBILITY: Good

WIND: Moderate locally rather strong Westerly (force 4 locally force 5).

Chess

White had play and mate in three moves

1. Qxb3+ Rc4 (d5)
2. Qxc4+ d5
3. Qxd5+

Hunters make last-ditch appeal to President

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

Pick on someone your own size: FKNK secretary Lino Farrugia accuses the EU of bullying tiny Malta

THE hunters' and trappers' federation FKNK gathered its members in force yesterday morning at the old Roman Domus in Rabat, where top officials called on President Edward Fenech Adami to intervene personally in order to rescue spring hunting from an almost certain ban.

In a colourful display of banners, placard and T-shirts sporting pro-hunting slogans, secretary Lino Farrugia, president Joe Buttigieg and PRO Joe Perici Calascione took turns to address the crowd, with all three speeches focusing on the way hunters had been deceived into believing their pastime would be unaffected by EU accession.



"We are EU citizens and we have rights just like any other citizen in the EU," Joe Buttigieg told the thousands of hunters who gathered for the second mass rally in two days. "Everyone can realise what we had and what we lost. We lost our hobby, something which has been coming since the 1990s."

Echoing Lino Farrugia's tirade in Gozo on Saturday, Buttigieg accused the EU of picking on Malta because of its size. And with an election less than a week away, he also urged hunters of different political persuasions to unite in their efforts to save spring hunting.

"Hunters and trappers were deceived in the past, but now everybody knows the truth and therefore let us look forward. Our political beliefs must be sidelined to defend our hobby," he warned.

FKNK Joe Perici Calascione similarly raged against the EU, which he accused of having an agenda against hunters. The loss of spring hunting, he claimed, also undermined Malta's sovereignty, as such decisions are now being taken by the European Commission.

Farrugia presented a resolution to the President of the Republic, in the name of "the citizens of Malta, Gozo and Europe, hunters and trappers and their families and friends", calling on Dr Fenech Adami to make good on promises he had made to the hunters when still Prime Minister in 2003.

The FKNK's resolution reminded the President that, when still Prime Minister in 2003, he had written a personal letter to thousands of Maltese hunters and trappers, assuring them that "the Maltese government had received an acknowledgement that traditional hunting and trapping would continue to be practised" after EU accession.

Even with Malta a member of the European Union. What the Nationalist Government agreed with the European Union is written in black on white in the Accession Treaty. This guarantees that hunters and trappers like yourselves shall continue practising their pastime in full."

The FKNK announced that it will be collecting signatures for a petition to appeal to the European Commission to withdraw its case against Malta.

In February, the European Commission took Malta to the European Court of Justice for permitting spring hunting in violation of the European Wild Birds Directive, despite the government's claims that it had obtained a special exemption during pre-accession negotiations in 2003. Both the Nationalist and Labour parties have gone on record saying that they will abide by the ECJ's final decision.

The Ornis Committee has twice so far postponed any decision regarding the dates for this year's spring hunting season.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION

Azzjoni Nazzjonali step up a gear: the small far-right party tries its hand at some scaremongering in Marsa, where an open centre for asylum seekers and migrants awarded humanitarian protection is located. The posters warns of the "approaching" summer - a good four months away - usually the season when calmer seas means increased traffic from irregular migrants from Africa. The number of migrants, 9,000, points to the total of arrivals since 2001 - but does not mention the number of repatriated migrants, and those who were afforded legitimate humanitarian protection and refugee status.



A gentle reminder that hunters are still a force to be reckoned with

Mistra nightclub permit 'an outrage' – FAA



FLIMKIEN Ghal Ambjent Ahjar yesterday issued its condemnation of the permit from the Malta Environmental and Planning Authority for the development of a nightclub in Mistra.

"It's an outrage," the organisation said in a statement. "If allowed, this development will be built within a Special Area of Conservation of International Importance and an ecological

buffer zone.

"This confirms yet again what Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ahjar has always insisted, namely that permits outside the development zone should not be considered by MEPA. We regret to note that neither of the major parties have committed themselves on this matter."

FAA said that permits that violate MEPA regulations should be rescinded and for the re-examination of permits recently passed by MEPA's DCCA Board, which has just resigned.

Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando is the owner of land in Mistra, for which a permit has been awarded to develop an open-air nightclub despite the fact that it is in an ODZ area and a Natura 2000 site.

In October 2005, a third party applied for a permit to build a 4,000-capacity nightclub. In March 2006, the planning directorate recommended to the DCC a refusal of the application for the land being outside development zone, but in November 2007, the DCC A issued the permit following a positive recommendation by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA).

Pullicino Orlando said he was not the applicant for the permit in question. He said he reached an agreement with a third party and reached an agreement with that person to start developing that land. "I never met the applicant because I reached the agreement through a third party," Pullicino Orlando said.

He has not declared whether, as self-styled environmentalist, he was in favour of this project or not. "I have already said that the land in question is mine. I have rented the land to third parties and I do not know even who the applicant is. I will not defend this development because it is not mine," he said on Saturday.



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