



**KARL SCHEMBRI IN  
RAFAH** pgs 10,11 ▶



# OBAMA, THE NEW ERA

**As the Bush era  
finally comes  
to an end,  
millions witness  
the historical  
swearing-in of  
Barack Obama  
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## Government Whip demands consultation on EU Commissioner

**MATTHEW VELLA**

GOVERNMENT whip David Agius expressed a resounding entreaty to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, so that the next appointment for Malta's European Commissioner will not be another foregone conclusion.

Still reeling from a press leak that saw George Abela's nomination for the presidency made public before Nationalist MPs were even informed, many backbenchers told MaltaToday

they wanted to be consulted on Gonzi's choice for Commissioner.

David Agius was adamant in his request: "I'm expecting 100% consultation on the issue, unlike what happened in the choice of president."

Agius said he was confident that the prime minister would not be disappointing MPs.

"I am 100% sure that the prime minister got the message and I have the backing of the entire parliamentary group on the matter," Agius said, who

made the point in the parliamentary meeting which discussed Gonzi's nomination of Abela last week.

"We are demanding that we get consulted, always after the Cabinet, and I am proposing that the group may get to meet every fortnight after the Cabinet meetings," Agius said.

He said PN parliamentary group meetings had been more frequent in 2008 than in the previous administration.

Other MPs, who spoke to MaltaToday on condition of

anonymity, spoke of their disappointment that the choice of George Abela seemed to have been a foregone conclusion in which they had no say whatsoever.

"Names for the next Commissioner are already being floated about, months ahead of the appointment. We certainly want to have a word about who should be considered for such an important post," one backbencher said.

The names include those of incumbent Joe Borg, the former

foreign minister appointed to Commissioner responsible for the EU's maritime policy and fisheries; but also that of Richard Cachia Caruana, Malta's permanent representative to the EU.

Gonzi's 'surprise' nomination of George Abela, a former Labour deputy leader to president, stunned PN insiders who were expecting a Nationalist heavyweight to move into San Anton.

These included Speaker of

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