MALTA'S INDEPENDENT VOICE



RCC for EU Commissioner, Busuttil for Permanent Representative

THE prime minister has decided that the next European Commissioner will be Richard Cachia Caruana, the permanent representative to the EU, whose position will be offered to Simon Busuttil, the MEP.

Highly placed sources have told MaltaToday that Lawrence Gonzi has already taken his decision to replace Joe Borg, whose tenure comes to an end in October.

The Cabinet and parliamentary group have not been informed of Gonzi's decision.

With Cachia Caruana expected to vacate his role as Malta's ambassador to the EU, it is Simon Busuttil who is being tipped to take up the position of permanent representative.

A preliminary meeting between Cachia Caruana and Busuttil has already been held at Dar Malta, where the permanent representation's organigram was reviewed.

But Simon Busuttil is still contesting the Eu-

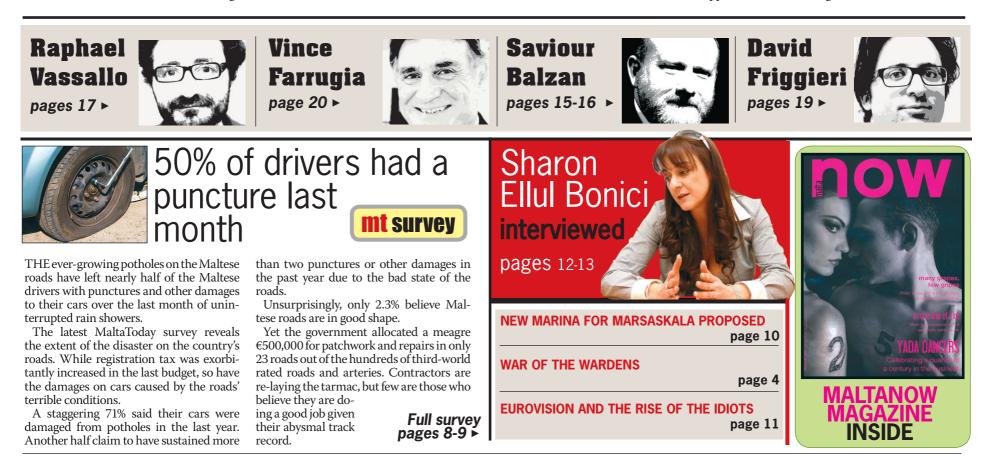


Cachia Caruana and his imminent successor at Dar Malta, Simon Busuttil

ropean Parliament elections to be held in June 2009, despite Gonzi having already decided that he should be permanent representative.

The prime minister will first ensure that Busuttil, now a main vote-catcher for the PN, will garner as many votes as possible for the June elections, before asking him to take up the new role in Brussels. Busuttil got close to 60,000 first preference votes in 2003. The current Maltese Commissioner, Joe Borg, recently expressed his desire to serve a second term, saying he knows the workings of the Commission very well and that he is ready for another term if the Prime Minister re-appoints him.

But Cachia Caruana has also been angling for the €220,000-a-year job with the Commission. And Simon Busuttil's name was already floated in the press as one of the possible candidates for a high-profile European post. The president of the commission, José Manuel Barroso, is said to be pushing for the reappointment of Joe Borg to a second term.



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