



Sitting on a time-bomb

▶ see Raphael Vassallo page 13

Wednesday, 01 August 2007 – issue 16

www.maltatoday.com.mt



Penderville Ltd claims the garden at Haven Lodge was part of the Lm10m land deal in 2005

## Anger as Pender Place claims private garden

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

THE Pender Gardens project in St Julian's is mired in a land ownership dispute, with residents of an adjacent apartment block claiming that a strip of land bordering the site – and which was sold to Malta Government Investments Ltd (MGI), and later to Penderville Ltd, for development into the Pender Gardens residential complex – is in reality their own property, as has been for 40 years.

The contested territory takes the form of a private garden across the road from Haven Lodge: a residential unit, home to 27 tenants, bordering the 250,000 square metre Pender Gardens construction site. A site map published by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) in March 2005 – shortly before MGI made a call for offers for the project proposal – delineates the plot in question as part of a “temporary surface car park” belonging to Malta-

com plc, on which the same authority later issued the permit for the Pender Gardens residential complex in 2005. But irate Haven Lodge residents have contacted MaltaToday, insisting that this plot forms part of the footprint of their own apartment block, and that ownership of the garden is shared equally by all 27 residents. As such, the residents claim that neither Maltacom plc nor MGI Ltd had any legal title to the garden, still less the right to

sell it to third parties for the purpose of development. In support of their claim, residents have produced copies of a contract, together with annexed site plans, which illustrate that the area now occupied by the fringe garden was one of a number of plots sold by Mgr Ignatio Sciberras Psaila, provost of the St Helena Basilica in Birkirkara, to John Mary and Francis Portelli in 1966. The land was subsequently developed into the present Haven ▶ page 3

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## War of words between George Pullicino and Ta' Cenc developers

JAMES DEBONO

A war of words on the interpretation of phrases in the Structure Plan and the Gozo and Comino Local Plan has erupted between Environment Minister George Pullicino and promoters of the Ta' Cenc development.

Despite the minister's clear pronouncement last year against any new development in Mgarr ix-Xini, the developers are still proposing 38 villas at the picturesque inlet – 20 less than the 58 villas proposed in 2005.

The authors of the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for the development have questioned the legality of George Pullicino's pronouncement that the Gozo and Comino Local

Plan precludes any new development in this sensitive area.

But Pullicino reiterated his stand against any new development at Mgarr ix-Xini. A spokesperson for the minister yesterday reaffirmed that both the relevant Structure Plan and the Gozo and Comino Local Plan “do not allow any new development at Mgarr ix-Xini near the existing villas.”

The developers claim the proposed villas are close to 10 existing villas constructed in the 1960s. But the local plan approved in August last year states that MEPA should “limit development in the lower part of the plateau (near Mgarr ix-Xini)”. According to Pullicino, this means that development “is to be limited to what is already existing.” ▶ page 7

## Selmun murder suspect arraigned

A Syrian national was charged in Court last night with the murder of Ebdou Ismael Abod, 29, also from Syria but resident of Hamrun, on the night between Sunday 29 and Monday 30 July.

Ebrahem (aka Ibrahim) Alhamow, 25 from Aleppo, was yesterday charged with dealing the victim numerous blows to the head with a hard, blunt instrument, causing grievous injuries resulting in death.

He was also charged with causing damage exceeding Lm500 to the victim's vehicle, a white Ford Escort Mark 2 van.

Alhamow, who has been residing in Malta for four years and works in the tiling industry, pleaded not guilty to all charges. His defence counsel Dr Mark Busuttil requested that his client be granted bail, but presiding magistrate Doreen Clark turned down the request after prosecuting officer Inspector Christopher Pullicino argued that Alhamow, who had entered Malta illegally, might attempt to flee the country if



granted conditional liberty.

The murder came to light after two tourists spotted the victim's van below a cliff in Selmun on Monday morning.

Police investigating the case took less than 24 hours to arrest the suspect, making this one of the fastest crimes ever solved locally.

Abod, who worked as a plasterer, was married to a Maltese woman and has been a resident in this country for six years.

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