

REBIRTH OF THE COOL?
 Claire Bonello - page 13

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Ryanair warns minister over Bologna

RYANAIR has told Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech that failure by the government to allot it the Malta-Bologna route could result in the “jeopardising” of its entire package of flights from Malta.

Informed sources told MaltaToday the stern warning comes after a month of demands from the Irish carrier to take over the Bologna route, recently vacated by Italian low-fares Meridiana.

Yesterday, Ryanair’s deputy CEO Michael Crawley said discussions on the route were “still ongoing”, but he added that he could not comment on the future of Ryanair until discussions finish.

The airline wants to fly to Forli, outside Bologna, to have an additional short-haul flight. Sources say the route is part of an informal “deal” with government after Ryanair took over long-haul flights to Stockholm, Bremen and Valencia. The airline was refused the Trapani route initially.

Attempts to contact the tourism minister yesterday proved futile.

Immigration: 89 arrivals the day after Frontex resumes

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

A TOTAL of 118 irregular migrants entered Maltese territory over the past 24 hours, just one day after Nautilus II, the second EU-coordinated Frontex mission, recommenced on Monday.

Of these, 89 made it to shore in two separate boatloads under surveillance by the Armed Forces, and are now in detention. The boats were separately escorted by AFM patrol boats into Wied il-Buni, Birzebbugia, at 4.00am and 2.40pm respectively.

Among the asylum seekers were eight women, two children and one baby.

An AFM spokesman told this newspaper that the second boatload of immigrants which landed at Birzebbugia yesterday afternoon, consisting of 21 men, six women and two children, was first spotted by the Armed Forces at around 2pm when already “almost at Delimara point.”

“You could say they almost made it to shore under their own steam,” the spokesman said. “Six of them were wearing life-jackets, and all were in a good state of health.”

Meanwhile an additional 29 immigrants – three of them women – were also being monitored while sailing northward towards Italy in rough conditions yesterday evening.



Photo: MaltaToday archive

At the time of going to print it was unclear whether the passengers would be apprehended by the AFM and brought to Malta, or allowed safe passage to proceed towards their destination of choice.

What is known is that at approximately 6pm, one of the passengers used a mobile phone to contact a resident at the Marsa Open Centre, who in turn informed the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

**DETENTION CENTRES
 A BREEDING GROUND
 FOR CONTAGIOUS
 DISEASES - UNHCR**

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KHARTOUM BOOMS, DARFUR BURNS pg9

No guarantees on postal prices

JAMES DEBONO

GOVERNMENT won’t commit Malta’s newly privatised postal services not to raise prices, but Maltapost will only be able to increase prices if it produces “robust evidence” as justification.

Labour deputy leader Charles Mangion is calling on the Malta Communications Authority to ensure postal prices are not increased by Maltapost, which he described as a “private monopoly”.

Government however said it will be the MCA to determine whether price increases are justified. “The principle of gearing prices to cost ensures that... the postal business remains financially viable at the required quality standards,” the communications ministry said.

The MCA said it can only guarantee that it will “continue to ensure that the evaluation of any potential future price requests

will take into account the principle of cost orientation and that postal services remain affordable to end-users.”

As Malta joins Germany and the Netherlands as the EU’s only completely privatised postal



services, Maltapost remains bound by the universal service obligation.

Despite Labour’s reservations on privatising a “high-flying” government department, Mangion said Labour would not consider re-nationalisation if elected. But he insisted the MCA should not allow any increase in prices.

As the universal service provider, Maltapost is obliged to guarantee a minimum of one clearance and one delivery to the home or premises of every person in Malta and Gozo, on every

working day and not less than five days a week. Post offices may only be closed or moved in agreement with the MCA, which can also order new access points.

And Maltapost remains obliged to provide clearance, sorting, transport and distribution of postal articles and packages up to 20kg; registered mail; a service for insured articles within Malta and abroad; and a service for the blind.

On 3 September, the Cabinet approved a 25% share transfer to Lombard Bank for Lm1.2 million. After buying Transend’s stake, the bank now owns 60% of Maltapost. The remaining 40% is to be sold to the public. In one fell swoop, Lombard became the key player in the banking sector by acquiring Maltapost’s post offices which will now provide banking as well as postal services.

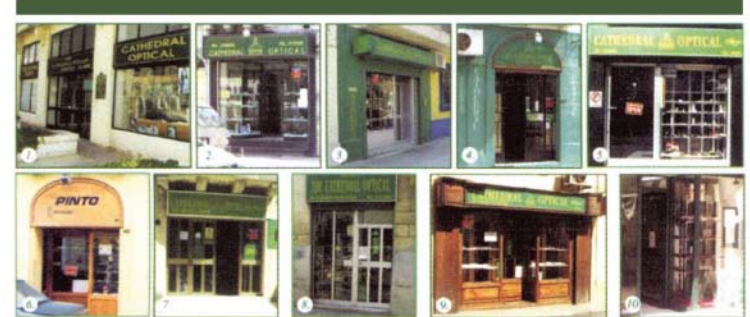
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