



Sant snubs Xarabank

Challenges Gonzi to TV duel

Labour leader denies boycott - claims Xarabank is not the right platform for debate

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

LABOUR leader Alfred Sant yesterday challenged Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi to a series of pre-electoral campaign televised debates, suggesting that these should be organised according to rules established by "independent journalists' institutes" as opposed to "entities

which have a financial or commercial interest in the media aspects of debates".

In a formal letter addressed to the Prime Minister and distributed to the media yesterday, Sant also revealed details of private conversations with Lawrence Gonzi, suggesting that the prime minister himself had complained about the standards of local televised debate of Where's Everybody? productions such as Xarabank, hosted by Peppi Azzopardi

on TVM.

"It is in the national interest that serious and civil political debates between the leaders of Malta's two foremost political parties are held on the national station," Sant wrote yesterday, hours after informing the producers of Xarabank that he would not be accepting an invitation to participate in this Friday's edition.

Coming after a number of public spats with Where's Everybody? producers – the most recent in-

volving a clash with Lou Bondi over the MLP's economic proposals – and the ongoing showdown between the PBS board of directors and editorial board, yesterday's move has widely been interpreted as a direct challenge to the Prime Minister to address the issue of standards at the national broadcaster, which Sant himself has repeatedly referred to as "Mandra Malta" ("Mandra" being the Maltese word for a pigsty.)

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British High Commissioner pulls out of Reporter

Britain won't reveal whom it supported in CHOGM farce

KARL SCHEMBRI

BRITAIN intends keeping its vote and lobbying for the Commonwealth Secretary General a closely guarded secret amid accusations of double dealing and betrayal of a fellow EU member resulting in Foreign Minister Michael Frendo's candidature being turned down last Saturday.

Reacting to MaltaToday's story on Sunday, British High Commissioner to Malta Nick Archer denied that Britain lobbied for Frendo's contender for the post, Indian national Kamal Sharma, although he declined to elaborate on Britain's choice.

He also informed MaltaToday editor and presenter of TVM programme Reporter Saviour Balzan that he was pulling out of an interview he had agreed to

give on the programme, calling the story "extraordinary and factually incorrect".

But Frendo was unequivocal in his comments to the press shortly after the vote when he thanked Cyprus as the only other EU member on the Commonwealth, besides Britain, to



Nick Archer

have supported his bid.

"Cyprus have shown everyone what solidarity means; what it means to back an EU member in such a bid," Frendo said. "Their solidarity was crystal clear, unequivocal and honest."

Archer claimed revealing Britain's choice would dent the whole process, in which the vote is always suppressed and turned into a "unanimous approval" of the elected candidate irrespective of the result that is kept secret.

"We cannot say for whom the UK voted; to do so would undermine the Commonwealth's system for identifying new Secretaries General, so it goes far beyond us and you and India," Archer said yesterday. "Only Dr Frendo can explain his words, but clearly we did not declare for either country as Cyprus did for Malta."

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DOCTORS OF THE WORLD SLAM CONDITIONS IN DETENTION CENTRES

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Fireworks victim member of Pyrotechnics Commission

MATTHEW VELLA

THE man injured in an explosion inside St Michael's fireworks factory in Lija, Anthony Farrugia, is a member of the Pyrotechnics Commission which is expected to issue recommendations to the home affairs minister on fireworks safety, this newspaper has learnt.

Farrugia, 51, an AFM warrant officer from Lija, is the Pyrotechnics Federation's representative on the commission created by minister Tonio Borg last March to report on current practices in fireworks factories,

and to make recommendations on the location of the factories, as well as the storage and transport of pyrotechnics.

Farrugia suffered life-threatening injuries in an accident which took place inside the same factory which the Explosives Committee - the official body of explosives experts from the armed forces, the civil protection department and the police force – had in 2004 recommended to close down, because it does not respect the minimum legal safety distance from built-up areas, posing danger to nearby residents and property.

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