



Judge and magistrate hit back at government's boycott

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE judge and magistrate accused of breaching the Commission for the Administration of Justice's code of ethics have hit back at the government yesterday, accusing it of interfering in the raging controversy and blurring the distinction between executive and judiciary by boycotting them.

Tomorrow, Mr Justice Lino Farrugia Sacco and Magistrate Antonio Mizzi will be barred from the official Republic Day celebrations as government has decided to ostracise them following their defiance of the commission's orders to resign from sports coun-

cils on grounds of conflict of interest.

Announced by MaltaToday last Sunday, the decision was taken by the highest government circles and will be implemented as from tomorrow.

But speaking to this newspaper yesterday night, the two judiciary members hit back at the government, with the judge calling the decision a serious mistake and the magistrate charging the government with overstepping its remit and trespassing onto the judiciary's territory.

"In the interest of the Maltese people, I haven't spoken publicly yet, even though I have lots of things I would like to say," Mr Justice Farrugia Sacco said. "All



A GALA WITHOUT GALEA
Education Minister Louis Galea will boycott the Malta Olympic Committee's awards on Friday

I can say at this point is that I haven't received any official communication about any boycotts. It is obviously the wrong decision, because the Commission is absolutely wrong.

"The Constitution gives all the necessary guarantees to avoid all that the Commission is trying to infer. In the process, the Constitution itself is being breached left, right and centre; some fundamental principles are being defied; and this is totally wrong. I don't want to exacerbate matters, so I'll stop here for today. If they want to exacerbate matters then that's their decision and we'll take it from there."

Magistrate Mizzi also confirmed he only got to know about

the boycott against him through last Sunday's report, adding that the best person to answer would be Chief Justice Vincent Degaetano – who is also the vice president of the same Commission censuring him.

"I know absolutely nothing about this, beyond the report I read last Sunday," Magistrate Mizzi said. "I wasn't even informed officially about this decision. I think you should ask your questions to the President of the judiciary (Chief Justice Vincent Degaetano) as he is the one who can answer journalists' questions. That's what the protocol says.

"If, however, what was reported is true, then this is a

▶ page 7



The World is in my hands! Three students win Mediatoday essay competition - see page 3

After Budafel and Monfalco, Spain calls for tougher EU regulations on rescue at sea

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

SPAIN has requested the European Council of Ministers to adopt new, tougher regulations on rescue at sea, in a move which echoes the country's frustrations after the "Monfalco" incident last May – when Malta refused to take responsibility for a group of 26 migrants from the Ivory Coast, rescued by a Spanish fishing trawler outside

its own search and rescue (SAR) region.

The plea was made at the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (TTE) council meeting in Brussels last month, where the Spanish delegations presented a document under the heading "Rescue at Sea".

"The government of Spain contemplates with great concern the phenomenon of irregular immigration by sea in precarious crafts..." begins the six-page pa-

per. "The concern has increased in the light of the circumstances in which various recent incidents relating to maritime rescue have taken place, involving vessels flying a European Union flag and various ports and governments of coastal states."

Although the statement studiously avoids any direct reference to Malta, the allusion to "various recent incidents" is strongly reminiscent of the Monfalco and Budafel cases, both of which

took place in the same week, and provoked intense diplomatic wrangles with Spain and Italy respectively.

The latter case catapulted Malta to international notoriety, after the Independent (UK) printed

a front page photo-story of 27 African migrants desperately clinging

▶ page 5

THE INDEPENDENT
SMALL SCREEN QUEEN
WHY HELEN MIRREN WILL ALWAYS WANT TO BE ON TELEVISION in .media
EUROPE'S SHAME

MALTA'S 1st RATED PROPERTY WEBSITE
www.simonestates.com
CHECK IT OUT

159, Labour Avenue, Naxxar
Tel: 2388 0088, 7939 2939

