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Pullicino plays for time on Spring hunting

Crucial decision on whether to open season left to Ornis to 'recommend'

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

ENVIRONMENT Minister George Pullicino has said he is waiting for the Ornis Committee's recommendations before taking the uncomfortable decision on whether to open the spring hunting season for 2008 – despite the fact that infringement proceedings against Malta in the European Court of Justice will be the subject of an Environment Commission meeting to be held on January 30.

"The law establishes that the

Ornis Committee makes its recommendations to government, and government decides after due consideration," the minister said yesterday.

"Before the government takes any position on the issue, the recommendations by Ornis still have to be made."

The committee comprises representatives of both the hunters' lobby FKNK and conservationists BirdLife.

Having already violated EU law for a fourth consecutive year by allowing hunting in spring in 2007, the government was last

year accused of using the Ornis committee as a smokescreen.

Pullicino is not the only one to play a waiting game on this contentious issue, which in March 2007 resulted in an unruly and occasionally violent protest by hunters in Valletta.

Ornis Committee chairman Louis Cilia yesterday said he, too, is waiting for members to finally agree on a date for their next meeting.

"So far our members haven't agreed on a date, but I expect the meeting will take place by the

▶ page 5



Libel suits galore for TV guest who says he was threatened by 'police'

MATTHEW VELLA

A private citizen who featured in a Smash TV programme talk show last week is claiming he was threatened by two men posing as police officers, who warned him to "shut up" and not to participate in a TV show.

In a report filed with the St Julian's police on Sunday 20 January, Jo Said from Melieha said he was driving home towards his residence at around 9.00am when a white vehicle came headlong towards his car, cutting off his route.

The incident happened in Selmun Road, where Said lives. He told police officers that two persons, unknown to him, stopped their car right in front of him, showed him police identification and told him: "Shut up, don't say anything because our eyes are on you, and stop that programme."

Said was featured as a 'floating voter' in the Smash talk show Realtà, presented by Brian Hansford, on Monday last week (14 January), in which he levelled several accusations at the Nationalist government. The programme ▶ page 5

BA closely watching PBS newsroom developments

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE Broadcasting Authority is watching closely the development at the newsroom of the state public broadcaster as the news editor is getting ready to get out of Television House, leaving PBS without a newsroom head in the crucial run-up to the general election.

Sylvana Cristina's resignation becomes effective on 10 February but PBS sources say nobody has been earmarked or approached to replace her, despite the station's knowledge of her departure long ago, at a time when three new journalists have

just joined the station.

The BA's chief executive said yesterday night the development at PBS will be "closely watched".

"We're obviously interested in who will be taking over her role," said Kevin Aquilina. "I would assume someone will take over temporarily until she is replaced with a permanent appointment, but it's too early in the day to comment."

Before Cristina's appointment, editorial responsibility fell to then chief executive Andrew Psaila, who has been named again in the press as a possible contender, although PBS sources rule out that he would be in-

terested.

Current chief executive Albert Debono is most likely to take Cristina's role until she is replaced – although the possibility sends shivers down the PBS editorial board which has been at loggerheads with the PBS chairman and directors over several editorial decisions.

Last November, Cristina said the investments ministry had ordered "an imposed media blackout" on her that banned her from speaking to the press unless she gets the PBS chairman's permission first – a condition that applies to all appointees falling under Austin Gatt's portfolio.

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