

## Lm9 million investment in new hotel in Sliema

# 'Malta deserves quality in the tourism sector'

FRANCESCA VELLA

The latest project by AX Holding is aimed at creating a "prestigious" hotel in the heart of Sliema by next summer, because "Malta deserves quality in the tourism sector", said AX Holding chairman Angelo Xuereb yesterday.

The new five-star hotel by the name of The Palace was initially targeted as an extension to the four-star The Victoria hotel, but Mr Xuereb said that from the group's findings, it appears that more five-star hotels are needed in Malta.

He was speaking during a tour of the site of the hotel with Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech yesterday morning.

The hotel – a Lm9 million investment project – will have 155 rooms and is expected to welcome its first guests next summer. It will form part of a complex that includes two other successful AX Holding developments – The Victoria hotel and Palazzo Capua.

The corporate sector will be the hotel's main target and it will have a fully-equipped and state-of-the-art business and conference centre.

The Palace hotel's general manager Claire

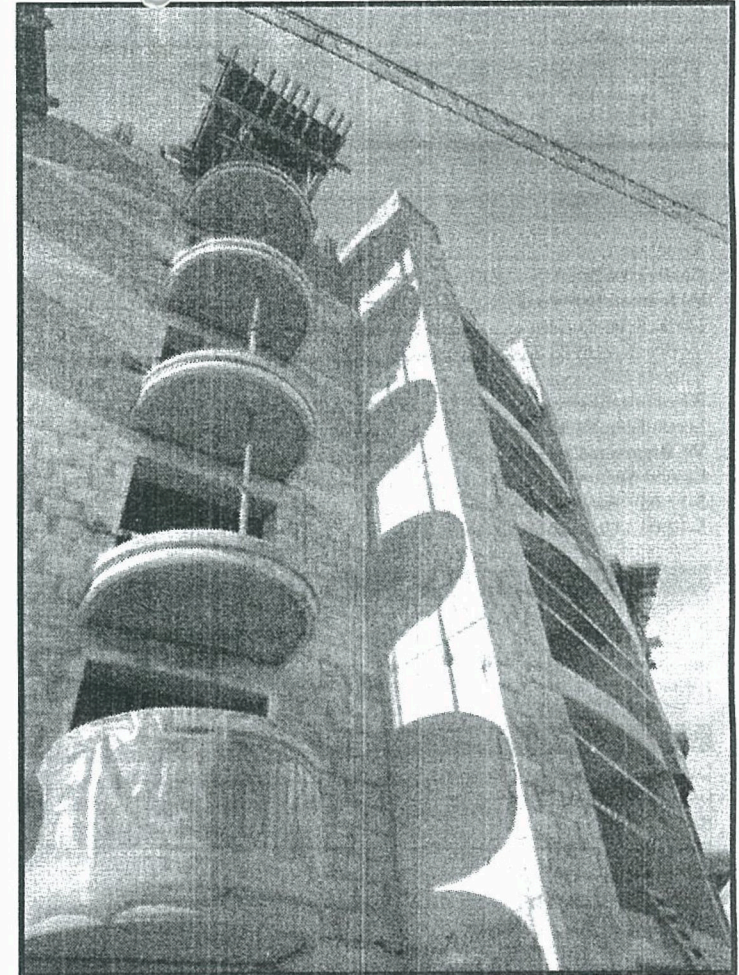
Xuereb said the new hotel will represent the ultimate in individuality and contemporary architecture without sacrificing luxury and finesse.

The architects, Mangion, Mangion & Partners, and the interior designers, Martin Xuereb and Associates, aim to retain the traditional hospitality and service found at The Victoria, while creating a vibrant and distinctive character, said Ms Xuereb.

While thanking the Xuereb family for its contribution to the tourism sector, Minister Zammit Dimech said he was very pleased to note that around 37 projects for new hotels or extensions to existing properties were planned over the next three years, for a total investment of more than Lm100 million.

He said the government took the decision to attract low-cost carriers to try to compensate for one of the country's disadvantages in the tourism sector – that Malta depends almost totally on tourists travelling by air.

While the hotels that close down are normally the smaller ones, the minister said that this year alone, two five-star hotels had opened – *Le Meridien* in St Julian's and the *Fortina Tower* in Sliema – a total investment of Lm21 million.



*The Palace, the new five-star hotel being built on the site of the former Victoria Hotel*  
Photo Ben Borg Cardona