

OPINION

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Education Minister **EVARIST BARTOLO** believes the two main political parties should take the historic opportunity to agree to a convergence of initiatives – despite their individual stands – on Malta's relations with the European Union



FEATURES

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In two features that focus on the French period, Rev Dr **J.D. GARZIA** writes on the Capuchin friary at Kalkara that was converted into a gun battery; and **JOHN A. MIZZI** on the French in Gozo and a brief period of Gozo's independence from Malta

PLUS

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Court confirms PN injunction to block removal of equipment

by **Sharon Spiteri**

THE wrangle over the Gharghur Tower continued yesterday and the Nationalist Party managing to get an injunction it obtained late on Friday night against the wireless and telegraphy director confirmed close on 1 a.m. this morning.

Mr Justice Lino Farrugia Sacco in the Civil Court found that the PN would have had no effective remedy had the situation not been frozen and *prima facie* it had proven it had rights to safeguard. The case was reopened after the director and the police commissioner sought to have the first injunction overturned.

In calling for the injunction on Friday night, PN leader Dr Eddie

Fenech Adami claimed the director had illegally given orders for the removal of a transmitter from a room the PN leased from the authority at the Gharghur tower.

The authority had only stipulated that the equipment was not to be used, the PN said, claiming the director's order violated the Broadcasting Act of 1991 which guaranteed political parties equal rights of access to transmission facilities.

The PN also claimed a violation of its right to privacy, protection of property, freedom of expression and free-

dom from discrimination.

But the director and police commissioner yesterday called on the Civil Court to overturn its ruling granting the injunction, claiming their arguments had not been heard. They claimed the transmitter was being kept without a licence, in breach of the Wireless and Telegraphy Act, the ruling was not justifiable and reasonable in the circumstances.

Their reply was soon followed by another application by the PN claiming the court had been entitled to hand down its ruling with urgency, seeing the director and the police had already

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Shunned opera house tender would have façade replica

by **Joanna Ripard**

ACCORDING TO the *Place de la Vallette* tender, thrown out by the government because it was not accompanied by a Lm500,000 bid bond, the building on the former Royal Opera House site would have a replica of the original façade. *The Sunday Times* can reveal today.

And, according to sources, not only have tenders for other projects been considered without a bid bond, some have even been awarded. One such tender was awarded by the government last summer, the sources claimed.

Informed sources told *The Sunday Times* the *Place de la Vallette* consortium, made up of AX Holdings, M. Demajo Group, Panta Lesco Ltd and Slip Form Engineering 2000 Ltd of Hong Kong, "has heard nothing at all" from the government after its tender was shelved.

The government is now considering the only other tender submitted for the project, under the *nom-de-plume Decorum Urbis*, a consortium made up of Blokrete Ltd, Ballut Blocks Ltd, Falzon Trading Ltd, Carmel Vella Ltd and Sarrebito Medical Supplies.

An exhibition of the proposals was opened at St James Cavalier on

Thursday. The public has three weeks to give its opinion and a government decision is expected to be taken at the end of next month.

It appears that the *Place de la Vallette* consortium was unable to release funds for the bid bond in the four weeks the government gave developers to submit proposals for the millennium project. Sources say the developers "had to start from scratch" – come up with the concept, sketches and then carry out a feasibility study and chase investors in just four weeks.

The *Decorum Urbis*, which reportedly bears such similarity to the design considered by the previous administration six years ago, clearly had an advantage over the *Place de la Vallette*, sources claim.

The Sunday Times has obtained a copy of the site development brief submitted by *Place de la Vallette* – an ambitious Lm28 million project that seeks the revival of the whole of the capital. To make the project feasible, more space had to be provided for

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PN incensed at removal of leaders' security

by **Herman Grech**

SECRETARY GENERAL Lawrence Gonzi yesterday described as "irresponsible" the decision to terminate police protection of Opposition leader Eddie Fenech Adami and shadow Foreign Minister Guido DeMarco.

"I hope the commissioner of police knows what he's doing. I personally don't think that any commissioner in his right mind would take such a decision," Dr Gonzi said.

Speaking to *The Sunday Times*, Dr Gonzi said the decision to stop the escorts was very serious. "Escorts are the police commissioner's responsibility. The implications are obvious. For some reason or other the commissioner feels the leader of the opposition does not need any security."

"If the commissioner is shouldering this responsibility, then it is his business."

But Dr Gonzi said he hoped this was not the result of pressures put on the commissioner.

Dr Gonzi said he found it very strange that this happens in the midst of a tempestuous political week, especially following the heated debates in parliament.

The PN, he added, had not decided whether it would launch a formal protest. Asked whether the motive to move the escorts could have been financial, Dr Gonzi said he could not believe that was the reason. Dr Fenech Adami has had a police escort ever since he has been leader.

The withdrawal follows the decision last month to stop round-the-clock police escorts for Joseph Fenech, better known as *Zepi l-Hafi*.

George Vella seeks co-operation with Tunisia

FOREIGN MINISTER George Vella underlined the need for more co-operation from the Tunisian authorities to help end the inquiry over the disappearance of a Maltese Piper Lance light aircraft which disappeared after it left Tunisia on its way to Malta in 1995.

Dr Vella, who was meeting Tunisian Prime Minister Hamed Karoui, also highlighted the need for a solution to the problem between Malta and Tunisia over the continental shelf between the two countries.

Dr Vella, who was in Tunis for two days for talks, also met his counterpart Said Ben Mustapha and Trade Minister Mohdher Zenaidi, Industry Minister Moncef Ben Abdallah, Transport Minister Hassine Chouk and Environment Minister Mlika Mohamed Mehdi.

Relations between Malta and Tunisia, and possibilities of further co-operation were discussed during the meetings.

Dr Vella also discussed points which will be on the agenda during the next meeting of the Malta/Tunisia Mixed Commission which is to be held later on this year.

The Department of Information said the Maltese and Tunisian sides agreed to try to identify tools to increase trade between the two countries, and on avenues to encourage reciprocal investment in the framework of relations which the two countries are developing with the EU.

Dr Vella invited the Tunisian Foreign Minister to visit Malta.

Police arrest youths over false rock concert tickets

THE POLICE arrested 10 persons for questioning over the printing and selling of fake tickets for the concerts by the rock band Iron Maiden, which was held at Ta' Qali yesterday and by Deep Purple to be held on Saturday.

Single tickets for one performance cost Lm10 while a block ticket for the two sells at Lm19.

The police said that among those arrested were three young men who allegedly masterminded the operation to produce the false tickets. Two of the youths, aged 17, are from Zurrieq and Attard. Another from Bugibba is aged 19.

During investigations the police seized a computer and a scanner, some printing paper and false tickets which were ready for sale.

The police said the Economic Crimes Squad started investigating after police headquarters were informed that false tickets were being sold for the two concerts.

Investigations revealed that a number of false tickets were produced and some of them had already been sold.

Members of the Fraud Squad were at Ta' Qali yesterday evening. Investigations are being conducted by inspectors Josef Petroni and Kevin Ellul Bonici under the direction of Assistant Commissioner Michael Cassar.

Finance and Insurance Supplement

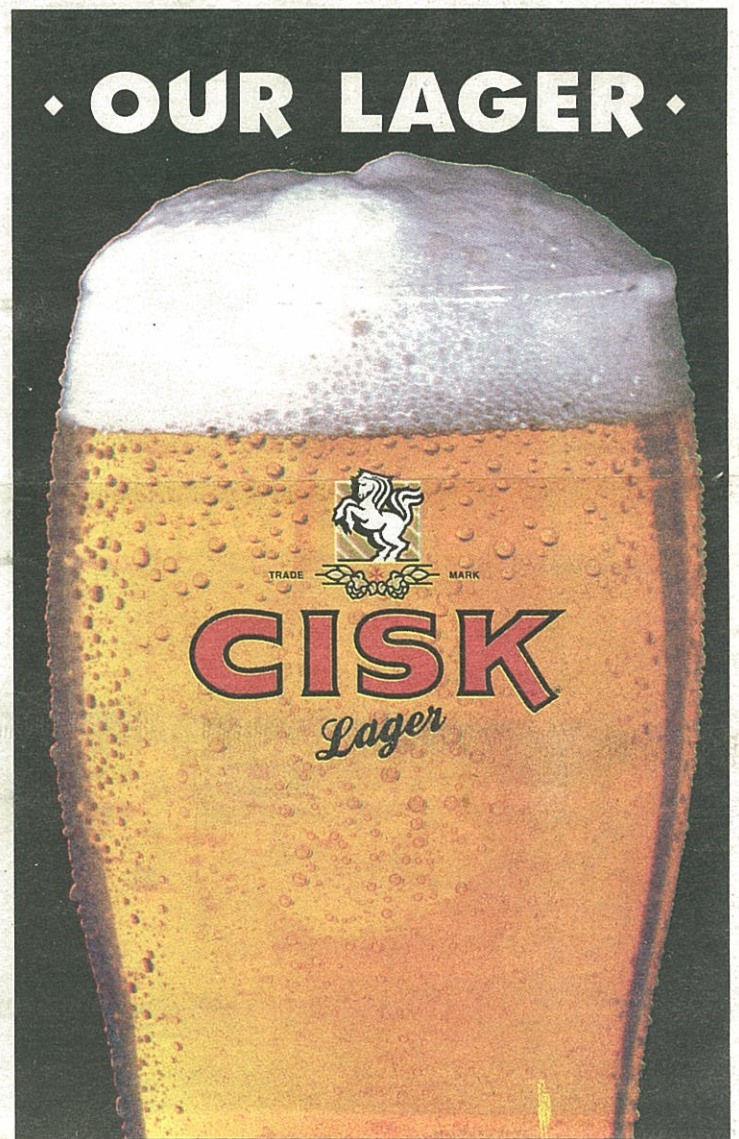
THE SUNDAY TIMES next week will include a Finance and Insurance Supplement. Make sure of your copy by ordering it now from your usual newsagent.

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Malta still has ambassador to Spain

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY clarified that Malta still had an embassy in Madrid. The embassy is led by a resident Chargé d'Affaires. The Maltese ambassador accredited to Spain is Mr Vincent Camilleri, who is resident in Paris





A DRAWING of Place de la Vallette's proposal to build the former opera house site to its original façade design, demolish the arcade to reveal the St James Cavalier fortification and the atrium beneath La Vallette's statue on Freedom Square

Government would be given 85% of building above ground

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commercial activities.

The project, designed by architects Mangion and Mangion, aims to create a long-term attraction, one that will win the admiration of future generations. The priority "was to create enough attractions and services to generate more business and entertainment activities within Valletta with an accent towards the revival of evening and night activities".

The developers believe that "...to achieve a positive impact with the historical setting, the rebuilding of the formal (sic) Royal Opera House in Valletta may be best effected by constructing it to the original façade design and form of construction". The necessary stone cutting and carving trades and the knowledge of stereoto-

my to realise the project are still available locally, albeit at greater cost. In this way the project would blend "the grandeur inherited from the Knights of Malta with the finest of British architecture".

The entire proposal includes a multi-purpose theatre/opera house seating 650, a casino, cinema complex, indoor/outdoor entertainment, retail complex, car park, besides a hotel in the south of the capital. There will be nine floors beneath the existing Freedom Square, four for retail, entertainment and catering purposes, and five for parking.

Sources said the consortium was ready to hand over 85 per cent of the main building above street level to the government to use as it pleased. Internally it would be handed over in shell form while the developers

undertake to make structural changes to accommodate the government's plans for its allocated areas.

Place de la Vallette also proposes to restore Freedom Square. The project incorporates the building currently occupied by the arcades on St James Cavalier's side. The arcade would be demolished to uncover the fortification's background and provide the main entrance to the cultural facilities that are to be housed in St James Cavalier.

The area below the existing shops, whose tenants would be given the choice to be located with other shops at street level or below ground within the shopping complex, would be excavated to the same levels as other areas.

Freedom Square's open area would essentially remain untouched to cre-

ate visual impact on visitors entering the city. However, Place de la Vallette suggests that the square's central feature can be a replica of the statue of La Vallette which used to stand at the entrance to City Gate. Incidentally, nowhere in the capital is there a monument to the grand master after whom it was named. It would be commissioned by the developers, who are also offering another option with a modernised structure for the government to choose from.

These plans aim to tie in with the proposed underground bus terminus outside City Gate, circular city buses, and ferry services to harbour waterfronts in the projected Valletta Development Connection Project, and with the possibility of an underground monorail link between the north and south of the island.

PN injunction confirmed

(Continued from page 1)

been on site to execute the order.

It claimed the director had tried to take the law into his own hands and the party needed no permit to keep the transmitter in its room at the tower. It added that it was the authority, rather than the party, which had wanted to conduct the test transmissions so the matter of a transmission permit was irrelevant in any case.

This was so clear that the court had stopped the BA from going ahead with transmissions but had not allowed the director to remove the transmitter.

Meanwhile, the Nationalist Party filed a separate application calling on the court to let it have its say in the proceedings filed by the operators of Super One Television against the Broadcasting Authority.

Super One operators on Friday obtained an injunction against the authority, stopping it from permitting two rival television stations from broadcasting on its UHF frequency.

Yesterday, Professor Guido de Marco, Dr Francis Zammit Dimech and Dr Tonio Borg filed an application on behalf of PN leader Eddie Fenech Adami with urgency.

They called on the Civil Court to let them intervene in the case.

They explained that NET TV had been granted permission by the authority to conduct test transmissions on the UHF channel and it was clear they should be allowed to have their say in the application for the injunction and any other related cases.

Deputy Attorney General Dr Silvio Camilleri and Assistant Attorney General Dr Peter Grech appeared for the director and the commissioner.

PN and government at loggerheads over Gharghur tower

THE GOVERNMENT has no intention of touching in any way the television licence issued to the Nationalist Party if it is in observance of technical conditions on which the licence was granted and also in full respect of the law, the Office of the Prime Minister said in a statement yesterday.

The licence issued to the PN and another applicant was subject to the Broadcasting Authority conditions that new UHF channels could be used from individual antennas and not from the Gharghur tower, the OPM said.

In the case of the licence issued to NET TV, a technical condition stipulated that transmissions should be held from Iklin, which was identified by the PN itself.

In a statement the OPM said this was so because technical reports show it was not possible to carry out added transmissions on the UHF frequency without creating strong interference on existing local transmissions. Such technical studies were carried out under the previous administration.

The OPM said the PN had been granted a licence for television transmissions by a government decision which had allocated new frequencies after the PN had applied with the BA.

But in a counter statement the PN insisted on its constitutional right to enjoy the same conditions enjoyed by the Labour Party. "The PN wanted nothing more, but certainly nothing less than the Labour Party."

The PN also insisted that the Gharghur tower was the property of the BA which was an independent authority set up through the constitution and which was not answerable to the government. The authority had the

duty laid down by the constitution and by the law to ensure the PN would enjoy the same broadcasting facilities as those enjoyed by the MLP, the PN said.

PN leader Eddie Fenech Adami also claimed the orders to remove the party's transmitter from the Gharghur tower were handed down by Minister without Portfolio Joe Mizzi. "It is crystal clear that Friday's action was done solely to serve the MLP. This is a grave situation and it is unacceptable," Dr Fenech Adami warned at a press conference.

The OPM said the government yesterday filed an application in court to revoke *contrario imperio* the injunction given in favour of the PN.

In its counter statement under the signature of general secretary Lawrence Gonzi, the PN said the whole issue was whether it was true that broadcasting from Gharghur caused interference to residents in the area or to another station. PN technicians maintain that this is not the case.

Test transmissions from the Gharghur tower needed to be carried out to establish whether transmissions were causing interference or not.

The PN said that the BA had agreed with this and, through a letter dated May 21, it had authorised that such tests can be carried out until June 4. It is obvious that the MLP feared the results of these tests.

In a statement issued earlier on yesterday, MLP secretary general Jimmy Magro accused the BA of not applying the same rules to the PN and to the Labour Party.

Mr Magro asked why the BA had not published the technical conditions of the licence granted to the PN.

"How could the BA authorise test transmissions from the Gharghur tower, when it knew of technical reports that it could interfere with Super One TV's transmissions?" Mr Magro asked.

The MLP also asked who from the Wireless and Telegraphy had authorised NET TV's test transmissions.

Mr Magro said he wanted to know whether the PN had conducted any illegal transmissions, and if it did, from which parts of Malta did it transmit? Why did the BA ignore Rainbow Productions Ltd's request to discuss with it prior accepting any requests by anybody to make use of the Gharghur tower?

Mr Magro said the MLP was going to sustain its position and was going to do all that was possible to protect its interests.

Activities to raise awareness on child abuse

THE ST VENERA local council is to organise two activities tomorrow to create national awareness on child abuse.

During the first activity, which starts at 9 a.m., children from schools in St Venera will walk from the local council premises to the parish hall where they will read out messages on the subject.

Education Minister Evarist Bartolo, Education Shadow Minister Louis Galea and St Venera mayor Michael Caruana are expected to attend.

A forum starts at the local council offices at 7 p.m. with the participa-

PA pending caseload lowest since 1993

THE PLANNING Authority said it has determined a record one thousand applications during May, an increase of 339, over the corresponding period last year.

In addition the PA also processed 424 notifications of development under the General Development Order.

May's work brought the total number of determined applications during the first eight months of the PA's financial year to 6,292, an increase of 1,494 over the corresponding period October 1996-May 1997.

The PA said that during this month it received 688 applications in addition to 236 notifications of development which, following the amendments to the Development Planning Act, no longer require a formal application.

The total pending caseload has been decreased to less than 3,500, the lowest ever since 1993, it said.

A PA spokesman said the authority is very satisfied with the results it has consistently been achieving since the amendments to the Development Planning Act came into effect last summer.

The spokesman said the PA is determined to continue to expedite the processing of applications to ensure the best possible service to its clients without losing sight of its general objective to provide a quality planning service for the Maltese islands.

Drugs find

PERSONNEL of 'C' Company of the Armed Forces of Malta 1st Regiment arrested three men in two separate road blocks in the south of Malta on Friday. Drugs were found during the searches.

The suspects, aged 20, 23 and 24, were handed over to the police drugs squad for further investigations.