

Sunday

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THE BICAL SCANDAL

Cash-rich companies given away for a pittance by Dom's blind servant

IN 1962, BICAL Bank bought its main headquarters, off Zachary Street, for the princely sum of Lm35,000. More than a decade later these premises were given to Mintoff's people's bank - Bank of Valletta - for nothing. In 1972 the Mintoff government suspended the BICAL licence and initiated legal

procedures against the Pace brothers. Cecil Pace, owner of the BICAL empire would spend 14 years of his life behind bars in prison, accused of forgery, misappropriation and fraud. In this second part on the dissipation of the BICAL associated companies' assets, *MaltaToday* reveals how properties and companies were

passed on for nothing to fledgling businessmen and companies that would later grow by feeding off the decimated BICAL empire. As Cecil Pace recalls: "This very programme to remove all the BICAL associated companies' assets vindicates the accusations that BICAL had no assets to pay off its

creditors and liabilities. Removing assets for nothing at all enabled the controllers to broadcast the message that BICAL had nothing." A case in point was Skylin, a property development company of which MIDC, a BICAL company, had a 50 percent shareholding. Skylin owned property in Kappara,

Naxxar, Lija and 12 apartments in a block of 24 in Marina Street Pieta. The block also housed Carways Ltd, the holding company of Cecil Pace's automobile agencies, which included Mazda, Lotus, Honda and BMW amongst others.

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Palm Court starting to close down Malta operations

Julian Manduca

A VERITABLE row has developed between the owners of the Palm Court Hotel in Qawra and the Malta Tourism Authority enforcement section, and two tourism establishments are the first victims. While the MTA will not publicly state what action it has taken

against the Palm Court, accusations and counter accusations are raging in private. The Palm Court group told *MaltaToday* it employs 1,000 employees and brings 80,000 tourists to Malta yearly, and is threatening to transfer their operations elsewhere.

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George Abela comes out of hibernation

Kurt Sansone

FORMER LABOUR Party deputy leader George Abela will soon make a return from the self-imposed media exile with a programme on Radio Malta 2 alongside Fr Joe Borg. The two will host a radio talk show every Saturday morning. Ever since breaking ranks with the MLP in 1998, Dr Abela has kept a very low public profile, even though he was a key player in MEUSAC (Malta-EU Steering Action Committee) during negotiations with the European Union. It was only after the referendum that Dr Abela conceded an interview to RTK radio. Since then he has

turned down repeated media invitations to be interviewed. This latest foray into the media comes at a crucial time for Dr Abela, who, close aides maintain, is still interested in leading the Labour Party. The radio programme coincides with the intense discussion going on in the Labour Party regarding the EU policy that has to be adopted in view of the changed circumstances. The internal EU debate, which has deflected much of the attention from Alfred Sant's leadership style, sees the current MLP leadership pitted against Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici. It is expected to come to a head in November's general conference.

kurt@maltamag.com



Posing with Manwel Dimech: not necessarily a circle of enlightened, tourists do their cultural bit

Photo by Pippa Zammit Cutajar

INTERVIEW: GAVIN GULIA

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