



Alfred Sant pg 12-13

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PM's choice of second electoral district worrying PN candidates

PRIME MINISTER Lawrence Gonzi is leaving everyone in his party guessing as to which electoral district he will be contesting in the forthcoming general election.

Candidates are allowed to stand in two districts according to Malta's electoral laws and with the Prime Minister definitely contesting his traditional second district, it's his procrastination on his sec-

ond choice that's troubling PN candidates, who are at a loss as to how they will conduct their personal campaigns in their respective districts.

Candidates speaking to MaltaToday said Gonzi's reluctance to declare his second preference is sending their home campaigns in disarray.

Party insiders are however suggesting that the PN's central ad-

ministration want the Labour Party to continue guessing about the election date, and also Gonzi's second-choice district.

Traditionally, the presence of a party leader on a district means fellow competing candidates will be asking for a second-preference vote at election time.

In the past there were exceptions to this unspoken rule. The late Joe Fenech, a former Nationalist min-

ister for justice, contested in the same district as Eddie Fenech Adami and had the temerity to ask voters for their first preference, and still got elected.

And the complicated single transferable vote system has meant many successful candidates getting elected after inheriting a fraction of the thousands of votes of super-candidates and party leaders like Eddie Fenech

Adami, and Labour leaders Dom Mintoff, Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici and Alfred Sant hitting more than double the electoral quota.

Party insiders believe Gonzi might go for the northern districts predominantly dominated by Nationalist majorities, namely the eleventh district that includes Mosta, Attard, Mdina and Bazzan, or the seventh district that includes Zebbug, ▶ page 4



The team of journalists who will be anchoring illum, the first independent Maltese language newspaper to be published by MediaToday. Pictured here are illum editor Kurt Sansone (sitting), former One news journalist Julia Farrugia (right), ex-NET TV journalist Karl Stagno-Navarra and newcomer Franica Pulis

EU investigating PBS misuse of programme funds

Karl Schembri

THE EUROPEAN Commission has just launched an investigation into a Lm500,000 grant by government to PBS for public service programmes that were instead used for operations, MaltaToday can reveal.

The investigation was launched following a story carried by this newspaper last month, and confirmed by Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech in parliament later, detailing how the state broadcaster failed to use a staggering 33 per cent of the funds channelled by the government for quality programmes also known as Extended Public Service Obligation (EPSO).

Confirmed by an internal KPMG audit report commissioned by the Culture Ministry and released to the public only in edited version, PBS's failure to use the funds correctly is known to have infuriated the ministry as it compromised the station's possibility to argue for further funding for quality programmes, at a time when the board of directors is under attack for totally ignoring the public service broadcaster's ethos.

A spokesperson for the European Commission confirmed that the grant was the subject of an investigation from Brussels given that State aid had to adhere to EU regulations. ▶ page 9

Junkies evicted from Pietà, gather in Msida

James Debono

A BYE-LAW prohibiting "loitering" in St Luke square outside the general hospital in Pietà has driven junkies who hang around the Detox centre downhill, to the Msida area frequented by Junior College students.

900 heroin addicts currently frequent the detox centre, just a step away from the St Luke's Hospital for methadone treatment. Since 300 of these are unemployed,

and many used to spend their day hanging around the hospital area. Unsurprisingly, the place also used to attract pushers.

The bye-law, which came into force in July, defines loitering as the persistent presence of any person for no apparent reason in the square. It excludes persons carrying out an official duty in the square. Anyone found loitering in the square is liable to a Lm30 fine.

Pietà mayor Sunny Attard is satisfied with the results of the

bye-law: "The number of people hanging around the square has decreased drastically," he told MaltaToday.

Yet as a consequence of this draconian law, junkies simply shifted down St Luke's hill to an area next to the Winter Bar in Msida. Residents living in this area have complained to the Msida council that drug abusers were even taking drugs in broad daylight. They have even backed their claims with photos. ▶ page 5

MOVE YOUR CLOCK ONE HOUR BACK



No change in pension age before 2010 – Sant

SANT HAS declared that "political responsibility" will enable a future Labour government to halve the energy surcharge: "you balance out the books within the context of the politics you're setting out. You base your politics on that goal, and you balance your books."

In an interview with MaltaToday, Sant says he will launch a general cut of 3-5% on government expenditure except for the social expenditure, and trim off consultancies and other money-wasters, saying this can generate Lm60 million in savings.

He also effectively ruled out reverting the pension age from 65, if the current pensions bill passes before a new Labour government would have finalised its own proposals in 2010. "In 2010 the changes will be enacted, abolishing the previous amendments."



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