

# maltatoday



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## Rizzo sues

Police Commissioner hires top criminal lawyer for libel case

IN an unprecedented move yesterday, Commissioner for Police John Rizzo sued MaltaToday's editors for libel, making recourse to top criminal lawyer Joe Giglio – traditionally found confronting police and prosecution lawyers – instead of making use of the government's and police legal services.

Late last night Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg refused to comment on the matter. He was asked whether he was consulted by the Commissioner, and whether he had given the green light for the libel case to go ahead.

However, MaltaToday can confirm that government circles attempted to defuse the situation by suggesting that instead of instituting libel procedures, Rizzo should issue a press statement.

Rizzo sued MaltaToday Mid-week editor Matthew Vella and managing editor Saviour Balzan,



over the contents of Balzan's opinion piece "I'm waiting", published last Wednesday.

In the article, Balzan expressed his opinion on Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon's public outburst, two weeks ago, in which he claimed he had "au-

thorised" Rizzo to take steps against the authors of anonymous letters and emails received by Falzon.

One of the emails was from an admirer of Falzon known locally as a celebrity chef, who stressed party unity in the ▶ page 3

## Confirmed: talks over shipyards did take place

THE Investments Ministry yesterday confirmed that discussions had indeed been held

exploring ways of how the shipyards can improve overall economic performance.

between third parties and the Malta Shipyards Ltd, although no offer has been received for the privatisation of the shipyards.

MaltaToday is reliably informed that exploratory meetings took place between MSL representatives on the sale of the dockyards to a foreign, non-UK, company. The discussions have been very fruitful.

Yesterday, a ministry spokesperson said the government and MSL directors are continuously

"In this context as part of its normal business operations, MSL enters into discussions with third parties involved in most of the sectors in which it operates, both

from the supply and demand sides. "As an integral part of these discussions, MSL is open to consider any measures that can improve its performance or its strategic position in the global shipyard markets."

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## Portelli to substantiate allegations

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE former PN General Council President and owner of St Philip's Hospital yesterday said he would speak to the police to substantiate allegations of corruption into the building of the Mater Dei Hospital when he is asked to give his version of events.

On Monday, PM Lawrence Gonzi published a letter he sent to Police Commissioner John Rizzo to investigate allegations

made by Dr Frank Portelli in the previous week.

Yesterday Portelli said he had not yet been contacted by the Commissioner but was ready to speak so that the police could conduct their investigations. "Whatever I said is true, I stand by it," he told this newspaper.

Portelli spoke of commissions handed over during the building of the new hospital in Tal-Qroqq that is set to open next month.

Asked what he made of the Labour Party's campaign using his image and soundbites to flog the government, Portelli said: "The MLP has a lot of explaining to do. There are three possibilities: One is that it believed there was no corruption at Mater Dei. Two, it didn't know about the corruption, because it is a lame opposition. Three, it knew about the

corruption but for Labour it was acceptable, maybe because there are Labourites involved.

"Corruption is everywhere and it's an equal opportunities employer. It's so pervasive many do not think something like receiving commissions is in fact corruption. It is, however, difficult to prove and many people are not ready to stand up to it as there are no safeguards for whistleblowers."

Portelli however added he was hopeful that with the information he will pass on to investigators the corruption at Mater Dei would surface. "If I was leading the investigations it wouldn't take me long to expose the rats," he said.

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## Lm103,308 for aborted golf course

JAMES DEBONO

IT COST the government Lm103,308 to realise that a golf course at Xaghra l-Hamra was unsustainable, nearly as much as the Lm150,000 voted for afforestation projects in the last budget.

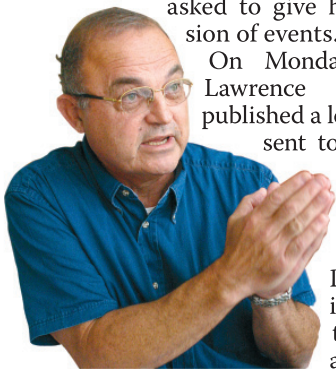
The money was paid for studies which ultimately proved that a golf course at Xaghra l-Hamra, in Ghajn Tuffieha, would require unsustainable real estate development.

The government had previously

stated it planned to recoup the money spent on an environmental impact assessment from the prospective developers of the golf course.

Now it has given up any hope on getting the money back. "Since Government has taken the responsible decision not to proceed with a golf course in this area, it will not be possible to recoup these expenses from any prospective developer," a spokesperson for Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech told MaltaToday.

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