



Interview:
Finance
Minister
Tonio Fenech
• The Times Business



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stagnant water
helps fight Asian
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Spurs at
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Longer maternity leave moves step ahead

Ivan Camilleri
Brescia

Parents can still be disappointed after a resolution aiming to increase maternity leave in the EU to a minimum of 20 weeks and giving fathers two weeks off was approved by the European Parliament yesterday.

However, it can be a while before they can pay open the baby as this move, vehemently opposed by businesses across the EU, cannot enter into force without the consent of member states qualified majority. An agreement on this provision seems quite unlikely at the moment.

If adopted, the directive will mean Malta will have to start granting would-be mothers an extra six weeks maternity leave over and above the 14 weeks already provided through national law. Fathers of newborns will become entitled to two weeks of fully paid paternity leave to stay at home with their babies, as opposed to just two days.

Large member states, headed by the UK, have already declared their opposition and said they would campaign to defeat the resolution when it arrived in EU Council level.

Malta has not yet adopted an official position on the directive and

has so far taken a cautious attitude, probably to wait for the EP's vote before forming its official stand. However, the government is being pressured by the Maltese business community to reject the proposals considered to be a burden.

According to a study completed by the Malta Business Bureau, the move could cost Malta's economy leave bill by €12 million a year.

Malta's five MEPs who took part in yesterday's vote had different positions on the issue.

While the three Labour MEPs fully backed the provisions, the two Nationalist MEPs voted against an extension of maternity leave to 20 weeks as they preferred this to increase by four weeks, to 18, as originally proposed by the European Commission.

Apart from granting more leave to would-be parents, the new directive will also limit the dismissal of pregnant workers between the beginning of a pregnancy to at least six months following the end of the maternity leave.

It also lays down that women must be entitled to return to their jobs or to "equivalent posts", meaning a position with the same pay, professional category and duties as they had before their maternity leave.

Bad fall



Joseph Agius as he was rescued from a well in Gharghur yesterday evening. The police reported last night that Mr Agius was in critical condition. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier • Story page 6



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Claims of crisis in tourism
made for political ends *see page 20*

SECURITY
Malta to host
second Med. meeting

WEEKENDER
David Kellisher
'Surfing the net'

Call for protection of textile industry - page 5

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NATO chief
resigns
Jeremy Gaunt

NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes resigned from the top job at the western military alliance yesterday, forced out by a Belgian corruption scandal in what he said was "political murder".

Almost a year to the day since he took over at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Claes said his indictment by Belgium's parliament on Thursday had made it impossible to continue.

"I have decided with great regret to resign," he told a news conference. "No one can deny that I no longer have enough credibility to ensure the leadership of this great alliance. So is there another word than 'political murder'?"

In a long and angry statement, Claes reiterated his innocence in the bribery-for-contraband scandal that has dogged his tenure since he became secretary general on October 17, 1994.

He praised NATO for its achievements and personnel, but savaged his country's lawmakers for what he said was unjust treatment in indicting him before an investigation was completed.

"Although I am an angry man, I am not, and do not intend to become a bitter man," he said, defiant to the end. "The decision today was extremely difficult and a personal tragedy for myself and my family."

The White House said Claes would be missed and had provided "great leadership" during an important period for the alliance.

Secretary-General Claes
(Continued on page 2)

Elderly Qormi man robbed in brutal attack at home

□ Tied up with packaging tape and dumped on the floor

An elderly man from Qormi was yesterday still receiving hospital treatment for facial wounds he suffered during a brutal attack on him in a robbery at his home on Thursday.

The man, 75, who lives alone in Canon Road, was beaten in his home by two hooded thieves who stole over £400 and his gold necklace.

He was then tied up with packaging tape and dumped on the floor. Speaking from his St Luke's hospital bed yesterday, he said he went to his kitchen to get something to eat after he had fed his poultry in

Michael Testa

the backyard at about 6.15 p.m.

"I was shocked to see two hooded men in the hall. I think they were holding some iron object. I was really shocked," he said.

"They pushed me to the floor and started beating me with some hard object. I was hit on my head and kicked in my face."

They also threatened him as they forced him to tell them where he kept his money. While he was on the floor, bound, the thieves

ransacked the house.

One of the men also stole his wallet containing £70 and a gold necklace.

He said he managed to crawl outside after they left, and call his niece who lives nearby.

His bruised face and heavily swollen eyes are a vivid testimony to the brutal attack.

A police report said yesterday it appears that the hold-up occurred after the two thieves forced open the front door while the elderly man was in his yard.

Magistrate Dr Jacqueline Padman Crima held an inquiry.

23 new principals

A group of 23 new civil service principals have been appointed, not on the merits of seniority, but by passing an examination.

A Department of Information statement said that with the cooperation of staff unions, the public service has undergone a radical overhaul of its staff.

Performance agreements have been introduced for senior staff and agreements governing promotion and recruitment at middle management levels have been revised to give greater weight to performance.

The DGI said promotions by seniority have been removed and public service appointments must compete in the same examination.

The new system will lead to the creation of a pool of talent from which promising individuals can advance as far as possible, regardless of seniority.

The statement said the new system will strengthen the grade of principal and provide a foundation for efficiency initiatives.

MLP committee to recruit election candidates

A new Labour committee has been set up to recruit and vet potential MLP election candidates.

The committee, headed by Opposition leader Alfred Sant, will aim to attract prospective Labour candidates by approaching and convincing interested individuals, said MLP deputy leader George Abela yesterday.

Would-be candidates will then be examined by the committee to establish their suitability to represent the party.

The individuals chosen by the committee then have to be "cleared" by the party's Vigilance and Discipline Board before final approval by the party's general conference.

The party is still in the process of choosing its candidates for the next elections and has so far only announced candidates for the first district, Dr Abela told a news conference at the MLP headquarters in Warrington.

The deputy leader also gave an account of the money collected for the Labour HQ and the electoral campaign.

From the campaign for the centre the party raised £264,000 from its first scheme and from the second it received £173,000.

All the money went towards building the centre, he said.

Until October 3, of the third scheme, which is not over as it is extended over a period of two years, the party received £242,600.

A fourth scheme raised £378,954 including loans and donations.

The first fund raising activity for the electoral campaign was a car lottery from which the party made a profit of £31,154. The lottery will be drawn next Friday.

In the second fund raising scheme for the electoral campaign the MLP will approach the self-employed and small businesses.

Contributions have to be a minimum of £25 and a maximum of £200.

Dr Abela said the money collected will be invested in promoting the party's political message, particularly through the media.

Motorist injured

A 22-year-old motorist from Hamrun was slightly injured in a traffic accident in Durem, his Street, Mtar, on Thursday evening.

The police said the man hit a traffic island and crashed into a wall.

Three entries, three Gold Medals: Camus, voted the best cognac in the world.



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Three entries, three Gold Medals. Coincidence, or coincidence?



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