



INTERVIEW
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Justin Zammit Tabona

ISSUE NO. 443

www.business today.com.mt

WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE 2006

Business Today

Bianchi leads negotiations for Easyjet

Matthew Vella

Michael Bianchi, the coordinator of negotiations for low-cost carrier Easyjet with the Maltese government, yesterday said the airline will only issue a declaration "when the moment is right," when asked at what stage discussions were over the advent of the airline in Malta.

The news that Bianchi is leading negotiations on behalf of Easyjet comes at a time when hoteliers are grossly disappointed with the contents of a government-prepared report on low cost airlines which was presented to an MHRA

task force last week.

It is believed that the MHRA executive council was yesterday mulling the idea of calling an extraordinary general conference to discuss government's proposals which seem to have "fallen short" of what hoteliers were expecting.

Bianchi, the director of the Bianchi and Sons group, is among the main shareholders in the Malta-Mediterranean Link Consortium, who along with Vienna International Airport and SNC-Lavalin took over the ownership of Malta International Airport.

Bianchi said he was coordinat-

ing talks "in Easyjet's interest" after technical talks with a ministerial delegation started last week in London. The talks will be followed by another meeting in Malta between a delegation from the airline and government in July.

He said the fact that discussions were underway, was a positive step.

Talks with another low-cost carrier, Ryanair, have yet to achieve any form of agreement, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said in parliament on 14 June 2006.

Disagreement exists over

whether LCCs should be granted discounted landing fees. Zammit Dimech has stated that balancing the needs of the flag carriers including Air Malta, low cost airlines, tour operators and other players was not easy, saying there was still an opportunity for low cost airlines to operate to Malta

without harming other sectors of the tourism industry. ▶ page 7

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Immigrants up in arms against detention

Hundreds of immigrants escaped from the Hal Safi detention centre yesterday morning, leading to violent scuffles with police and members of the armed forces in the streets as, according to Police Commissioner John Rizzo, "they made their way to Castille to talk to the Prime Minister".

By evening, it was still unclear whether all the escapees had returned to the AFM barracks as reports of individuals who were still running at large could not be confirmed by the authorities.

At least eight police and AFM members were injured during the incidents and five immigrants were recovered for slight injuries.

In what was described by soldiers manning the detention centre as "the worst breakout ever", over 300



Police in riot gear resting outside the Safi compound after the situation was brought under control yesterday. Photo Gilbert Calleja

immigrants took to the streets at around 9.30am as police and the AFM tried to contain them.

All police officers on duty at the time had to be called on the scene to control the situation as the escaped migrants had already

reached the Luqa roundabout claiming they would march to Valletta.

It was at that point that some immigrants charged back at the police who tried to form a cordon.

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40,793 square metres earmarked for Smart City

James Debono

Agricultural leases on 40,793 square metres of land lying outside development zones have been terminated to make way for the SmartCity@Malta project in Ricasoli.

On 14 June 2006, President Eddie Fenech Adami signed the termination of leases on two tracts of land, the size of five football pitches in the outskirts of Xghajra and Kalkara.

A spokesperson for the ministry for home affairs confirmed that the leases are being terminated in connection with the Smart City project.

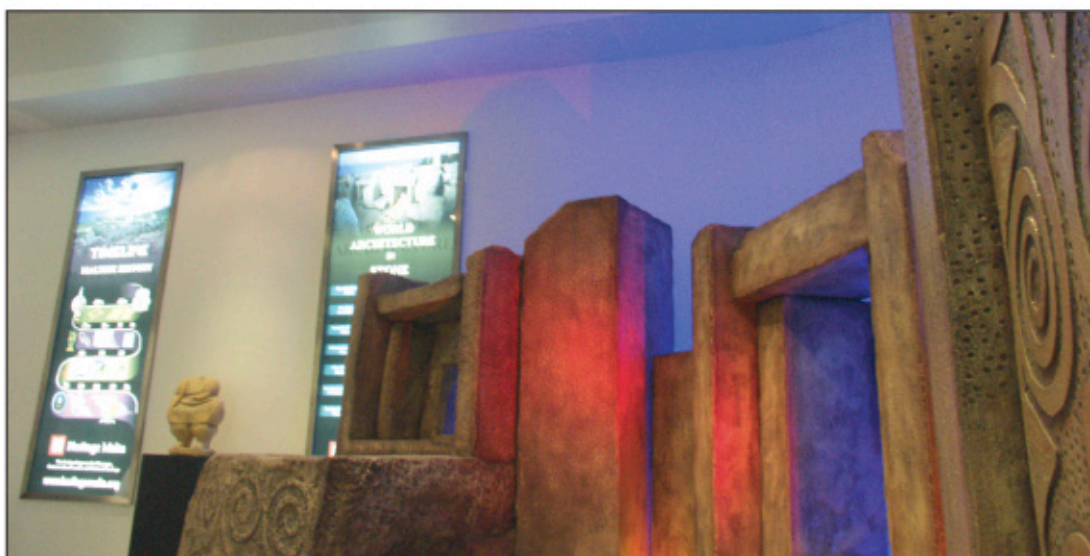
A substantial part of the land lies between the existing industrial zone and an open space known as San Pietru along Saint Leonard Street.

The area is named after Saint Peter's battery whose ruins are still found in the area.

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"Based on current energy supply and projected demand in 2010, Enemalta will not have any reserve energy capacity"

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The new arrivals area at MIA, inaugurated yesterday will put Malta on course to satisfy the Schengen travel criteria. The arrivals area also houses an artistic installation See page 7

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