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David Spiteri Gingell

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Troubled GWU loses second section secretary after resignation

Port workers meeting in Qormi today with ex-secretary

Karl Schembri

The General Workers Union's Secretary of the Maritime and Aviation Section, Emanuel Zammit, resigned yesterday, three weeks since secretary Josephine Attard Sultana and President Francis Buttigieg were sacked from the public sector section.

Citing an "impossible environment imposed by the GWU leadership" as a reason for handing in his resignation letter

just a day ahead of a port workers' meeting to be held in Qormi, Zammit charged the union's administration with attempting to undermine his integrity and his section's autonomy.

His resignation leaves only one remaining section secretary in the GWU - Karmenu Vella - of the three singled out in an anonymous leaflet as forming part of "Emmanuel Micallef's clique who do not belong to the union" in last October's administrative elections.



Emanuel Zammit

Zammit stood for months in clear defiance towards the union's administration in forging ahead with engaging the services of lawyer George Abela - who from GWU lawyer had been turned into the union's enfant terrible - in port reforms and at Air Malta.

Today, Zammit will be leading a meeting for port workers in the presence of Abela at St Sebastian Hall in Hal Qormi, where he will be informing them of the latest developments. Sources say the workers will also have to decide

their future representation in ports negotiations.

Zammit and his section's executive members - four of whom were also GWU national council members - presented their resignation letters after an executive committee meeting held at union headquarters yesterday morning.

"Their attitude and manners mademy life misery," Zammit said about the union's administration in a press statement released after he handed ▶ page 5

Lack of investment in research was "serious miscalculation"

Karl Stagno-Navarra

As research and innovation is key to any country's economic success, David Spiteri Gingell, CEO at MTTTS and Chairman of the Malta Council for Science and Technology argues that rationalisation on investment in research and development throughout these last years was a "serious miscalculation by government".

In an interview with Business Today, David Spiteri Gingell - who masterminded the recently published National Strategic Plan for R&I 2007-2010 - says that subsequent governments preferred to focus on other priorities.

"We have had finance ministers that looked more at balancing accounts rather than long-term economic investment," he says.

Arguing that R&I should not be shouldered by government alone, he urges the private sector to act and deliver.

Spiteri Gingell appeals to the local banks to open up their doors and



Gearing up for research and innovation

unleash funds without collateral constraints to businessmen who want to invest in R&I.

And the R&I document is described as a "good exercise", even if late in the day by Philip Micallef, former Malta Enterprise Chief Executive.

He opines that the strategy must not limit the accessibility of funds to companies registered

under Maltese Law, but it must also act as an umbrella for foreign companies. Micallef also stresses the importance of including tourism in the strategy for R&I, particularly through promoting agri-tourism as a new sector for growth.

Agriculture also merits to be addressed within the strategy, particularly the agro-production sector.

Fenech more positive on inflation than NECC chief

Despite the negative outlook of Euro changeover chief Alan Camilleri to Malta's current aspirations to join the single currency, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech yesterday minimised the concern about the current rate of inflation and stressed that when one looks at the statistical information, "it is evident that all we are in excess of the inflation reference value is just point three per cent".

Asked to react to comments made by Camilleri last Sunday in sister newspaper MaltaToday, Fenech explained that when one looks at the past trends, the rate of

inflation in Malta always reached a stabilisation point and took a downturn.

"Government remains optimistic that the country will reach the Euro targets," he stressed, adding that the current rate of inflation is "definitely not insurmountable".

NECC CEO Alan Camilleri said he was extremely concerned with the rising cost of living that could exclude Malta from switching to the European currency.

"Our major concern is the need for the Euro not to increase prices, and we are already worried about the inflation ▶ page 3



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Extent of real estate development and golf course in SmartCity undisclosed

James Debono

The government would not disclose the extent of real estate and golf development in the new SmartCity Malta project despite calls for transparency by MLP spokesperson Leo Brincat.

The ministry had refused to disclose this information when asked by sister newspaper MaltaToday which was the first to reveal that the hi-tech project could also include a real estate component

as well as a golf course.

The government has already submitted a Project Development Statement to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority which includes plans related to the project.

Reacting to Brincat's statement Austin Gatt's Ministry claimed that any disclosures on the matter could imperil ongoing negotiations with TECOM, the Dubai-based company expected to fork out the required investment to turn the Ricasoli area

into a hi-tech city, and thus would be against the national interest.

Countering government's reaction, Brincat described the ministry's response to his statement as "hysterical."

"In principle we are in favour of the SmartCity project but we cannot see any reason why so much secrecy exists on this matter," Brincat told Business Today.

The government has not denied that a golf course and real estate will be developed ▶ page 5

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