Friday, November 13, 2015

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Mdina Biennale artistic director Giuseppe Schembri-Bonaci (left) with Emanuel Delia, chairman of APS Bank, the main partner of the event, and Mdina Cathedral Archpriest Anton Cassar.

Old capital of new art

Many of the old capital's beautiful sites will double up as art spaces when the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale kicks off today.

Works by leading artists from all over the world, including Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo, will remain hanging in the island's first capital city until January 7.

This new edition of the Mdina Biennale, with the theme 'Christianity, spirituality and the other', takes a different approach to art and religion, and is being hailed as a bridge between different cultures, faiths and even non-faiths.

The new, conceptual direction of the event was developed by artist, art critic and academic Giuseppe Schembri-Bonaci, the artistic director of the Biennale.

The eight-week programme includes musical, literary and audiovisual events.

For more information, go to http:www.mdinabiennale.org. For the venues' opening hours, see http://mdinabiennale.org/index.php/participation/visitor-info.

Service pensioners are 'overjoyed' at the news

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Malta applied the Maltese legislation to those pensions in order to prevent overlapping [the receipt of both British and Maltese pensions] without taking account of the rules laid down in the (EU) provisions is well-founded".

"I propose that the Court should hold that, by reducing, pursuant to article 56 of the Social Security Act, Maltese old-age pensions by the amount of UK pensions, Malta has failed to fulfil its obligations under EU rules," he said.

The National Association of Service Pensioners was overjoyed with the news. When contacted, Publius Grech, the association's general secretary, said: "We have been waiting so long for this and, finally, we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. Successive government have been taking us for a ride for far too long."

Asked what would happen if Malta lost the case, Mr Grech did not mince words: "The government will have to give us back what was unjustly taken away from us.

"After all, the government has long been boasting that we now have a strong economy. So there should be no problem forking out the millions of euros taken away from us."

Acknowledging that the association must first await the final judgment, Mr Grech said: "We will insist that the government give us arrears dating back to at least 2004, when Malta joined the EU." The deduction of service pensions to Maltese former civil servants of Britain was introduced through a law by former Labour prime minister Dom Mintoff in 1979.

Former servicemen march during the Remembrance Day ceremony held at the War Memorial last Sunday. ***Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi***

Although successive governments continued with the practice, the Nationalist administration had noted the anomaly and started addressing the problem by reducing the amount deducted every year.

Following various petitions submitted by ex-British servicemen to the EU, in 2010, the European Commission started infringement procedures against Malta, calling on the authorities to stop the deductions, deeming them illegal.

However, the Maltese government insisted that the EU did not have competence over the matter. In 2013, Brussels decided to take the case to the ECJ.

In a TV interview soon after his electoral victory in 2013, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat indicated that EU action over service pensions could be coming to a head, adding he did not have any previous knowledge about the issue.

However, the Association of Service Pensioners rebutted the comments and said it had discussed the issue at length with both Dr Muscat and then PL spokesman Karmenu Vella (now European commissioner) before the election.