

Konrad Mizzi's New Zealand trust and Panama company declared in draft declaration of assets - Prime Minister

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Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said in Parliament this evening that Konrad Mizzi's trust in New Zealand and his company in Panama were listed in his draft declaration of assets which was to be tabled in Parliament soon.

He made his declaration after Opposition leader Simon Busuttil asked the Prime Minister for a ministerial statement.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat this morning said that he has no problem with the revelations that Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi has set up a trust in New Zealand to manage his family's financial assets.

Dr Mizzi admitted that last year he and his wife set up the trust to manage their assets in New Zealand. His admission came after claims started making the rounds on social media.

Questioned on whether this news, combined with the fact that Dr Mizzi is entrusted with multi-million government projects worried him, Dr Muscat said that he would only be worried if the minister didn't declare what he's done.

Asked whether he had a similar trust in a foreign jurisdiction himself, the prime minister said that he did not.

He said that he did not know whether his chief of staff, Keith Schembri had a similar trust.

Dr Mizzi will tomorrow be elected labour deputy leader after amendments to the statute proposed by Dr Muscat.

Speaking in Parliament this evening, Dr Busuttil said the new of the minister's trust in New Zealand and company in Panama was "shocking" and the people expected an explanation from the Prime Minister.

Both the trust and the company, he said, had been registered since Dr Mizzi became minister but a trust in New Zealand and a company in Panama were not set up for a minister's wage but for millions.

Panama was also considered a country linked to tax evasion, money laundering and corruption.

Replying, Dr Muscat said he would not be making a statement but a clarification.

He invited the Opposition leader to repeat his statement on the monies in such accounts outside the House as he believed such statements were libellous.

Moreover, the trust and the company were declared in the minister's draft declaration of assets to be tabled soon. There would have been an issue with them, he said, had they not been declared.

Dr Mizzi, Dr Muscat said, did not do as former minister Austin Gatt had done and forget to declare an account in Switzerland.

In a statement, Dr Mizzi challenged Dr Busuttil to repeat, word for word, "the deceitful and irresponsible allegations" he made in Parliament.

Dr Busuttil, he said, conveniently used Parliamentary privilege to try to tarnish him without substantiating anything.

He insisted that neither the trust, nor the company, had ever had any assets, bank account or money. The trust was aimed just for family estate planning.

In a reply, the Nationalist Party told Dr Mizzi "when in a hole, stop digging".

The Labour Party replied that the Opposition leader failed to take on the minister's challenge showing himself to be a coward who was not able to substantiate what he said.

All this, it said, was taking place on the same day that the work for votes case continued to be heard at the Gozo court.

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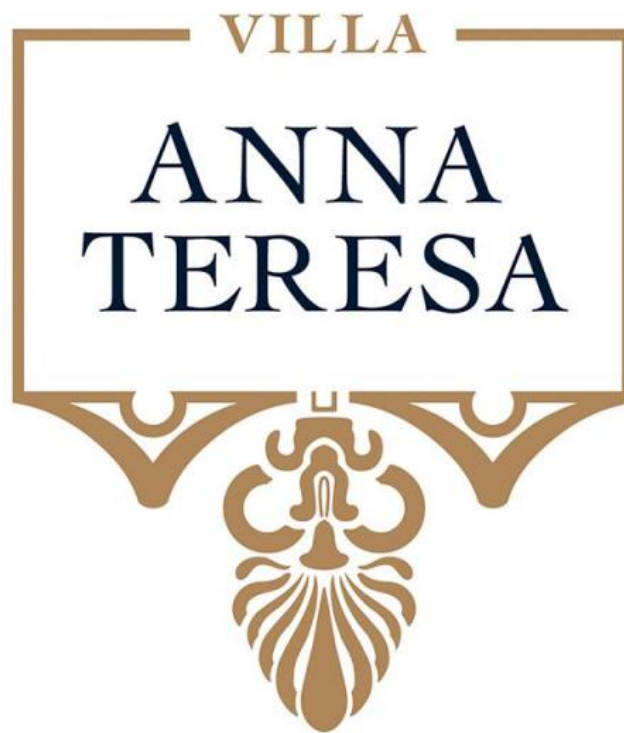
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