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Press digest

The following are the top stories in the national and international press today.

Times of Malta says Greek proposals for a cash-for-reform deal which would avert a default were yesterday welcomed by eurozone leaders as a positive step forward, but the move came too late in the day for a decisive breakthrough at an emergency summit last night. In another story, it quotes planning parliamentary secretary Michael Falzon saying that the controversial expropriation of half a property in Valletta involving Mark Gaffarena has exposed the need for reform in the Land Department.

In-Nazzjon quotes Opposition leader Simon Busuttil saying Dr Falzon should resign following the Gaffarena scandal, which was only one of many.

L-Orizzont says the Malta Financial Services Authority is carrying out an internal investigation following an exchange of e-mails between Keith Zahra and former Finance Minister Tonio Fenech.

The Malta Independent says Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi has ordered the termination of a contract of a former police inspector who was boarded out within four days and given a €60,000 job with Enemalta.

International news

Bloomberg reports European stocks rose, with equities from France to Germany and Spain rallying the most since 2012, on optimism that a deal between Greece and its creditors is close. Greek banks jumped the most since May 2013. European policy makers expressed confidence that an agreement with Greece was within reach after Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's government submitted a last-minute set of proposals.

Late in the night, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker held a briefing welcoming Greece's efforts. *Le Soir* says he described them as "a major step" taken by the Greek authorities into the direction of the expectations of the three institutions involved. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande also expressed confidence that a deal would be done.

While in Berlin, the first of several stops in Europe, US Defence Secretary Ash Carter has announced the United States would supply weapons, aircraft and soldiers for NATO's rapid reaction force to help European states defend against "security threats". *AP* reports that under the plan, the US would contribute intelligence and surveillance capabilities, special operations forces, logistics, transport aircraft, and a range of weapons support that could include bombers, fighters and ship-based missiles.

Huffington Post says Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Gaza's Hamas rulers have rejected claims in a UN report that found that both Israel and Palestinian militant groups might have committed war crimes during the conflict last July. Netanyahu insisted Israel acted according to international law. Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad criticised the UN investigators for what he said was "a false balance between victims and killers".

The New York Times reports a US airstrike in northern Iraq has killed an Islamic State operative who was "a person of interest" in the attack in the attack on the US embassy in Benghazi, Libya, in 2012. Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steve Warren said Tariq bin al-Tahar bin al-Falih al-'Awmi al-Harzi of Tunisia was killed in Mosul on June 15, saying "his death removes a jihadist with long ties to international terrorism".

A new European police unit is set to take on the vast online network used by the Islamic State group to spread propaganda and recruit new jihadists to its cause. Rob Wainwright, Europol's director, told the *BBC* that the new team would work with social media companies to identify and close accounts in an "effective way" of stopping jihadists from using the internet to recruit fighters.

France 24 says the French government is considering banning politicians over 70 from standing for office in a bid to inject new blood into the country's political class. A government-sponsored report also suggests limiting MPs and senators to no more than three terms in office as well as lowering the voting age to 16.

CNN quotes FBI director James Comey telling a closed-door Senate hearing that Chinese hackers might have stolen confidential and personal data of some 18 million public workers. If confirmed, the cyber attack would be the most more extensive ever suffered by a State. China has openly denied involvement in the break-in.

The Washington Post says South Carolina's Governor, Nikki Haley has called for the removal of the Confederate flag flying on the state capitol grounds, acknowledging that a symbol deeply embedded in state history is today widely seen more as a racist relic than as a proud heirloom. In urging state legislators to remove the flag from the skies above the birthplace of the Confederacy, Haley joined a chorus of leaders from across the political spectrum and around the country that has grown rapidly in the days since a white gunman killed nine black people at a church in Charleston.

Women's rights group Women on Waves is set to deploy a drone carrying medical abortion pills to Poland, where abortions are heavily restricted. Rebecca Gomperts, founder and director of the organisation, told *The Daily Telegraph* that if successful, they might do the same thing in Ireland, where abortion penalties are even harsher.

Sky News reports a plot by two teenagers to blow up Buckingham Palace was foiled when they were discovered by the mother of one of the 16-year-olds from the north-east of the UK. The boys, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, have been locked up for a year after they admitted buying chemicals online which were delivered to one of their homes.

Squatting in super-tight "skinny" jeans may pose a health risk, Australian doctors warned Tuesday, reporting the case of a woman who temporarily lost feeling in her legs from an hours-long squeeze. *The Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery & Psychiatry* said the 35-year-old collapsed and had to

be hospitalised the day after helping a relative move home, spending hours on her haunches to unpack cupboards.

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