

terrorists after at least 39 people were killed and more than 100 injured in an explosion on a busy underground train in central Moscow during the morning rush hour yesterday: **page 9**

HomeNews

Hospital merger talks: Two of Dublin's biggest hospitals, St James's and the Adelaide and Meath, are considering merging. The boards of both hospitals have given the go-ahead for talks on a possible amalgamation: **page 5**

Newspaper sued: A former Fianna Fáil press officer, Ms Mandy Johnston (right), who is suing the *Star* newspaper for libel, said an article in the newspaper could lead people to assume she was a person of "low moral calibre": **page 3**



European elections: Fianna Fáil has postponed tomorrow's selection of European Parliament candidates for the North-West constituency to allow the party to try to put its favoured candidates in place: **page 6**

SportsSaturday

United protest: Manchester United supporters stepped up their campaign of harassment against John Magnier and JP McManus yesterday by disrupting a race in which a horse owned by Mr McManus was due to run.

Celtic League: Ulster went top of the Celtic League last night after they beat Llanelli 10-9 at Ravenhill. Leinster lost 35-14 to Gwent Dragons while Munster beat The Borders 29-21 at Musgrave Park.

WorldNews

19 migrants die on English beach: Nineteen shellfish gatherers died on Thursday night after being caught by a fast-rising tide on an English beach, prompting charges of exploited migrant labour: **page 9**



Gaza settlers may go to West Bank: Relocating Jewish settlers from evacuated settlements in the Gaza Strip to large blocs in the West Bank is an option being weighed by Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon (left), a spokesman has said: **page 10**

BusinessNews

Unemployment on the rise: Unemployment increased in January for the first time in seven months. The seasonally adjusted total rose by 1,200 to 171,000: **page 16**

Consortium increases Gresham offer: The group of three businessmen seeking to take over the Gresham Hotel Group have raised their proposed offer for the company from €1.35 to €1.45 per share: **page 17**

Weather

It will be windy and chilly throughout the country today. There will be occasional showers, some of them wintry. Highest temperatures of 5-8 degrees: **page 26**

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Limerick museum at centre of looted Nazi art claims

Hunt family denies claim by Wiesenthal Centre

ARTHUR BEESLEY,
POLITICAL REPORTER

The leading anti-Nazi group, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, has called for an inquiry into the contents of the Hunt Museum in Limerick after linking the former owners of the collection to "notorious dealers in art looted by the Nazis".

The claims about the multi-million-euro art and artefact collection amassed by the late John Hunt and his late wife, Gertrude, were made in a letter to the President, Mrs McAleese, last week. The centre's international liaison director, Dr Shimon Samuels, called on the President to suspend the Museum of the Year award she presented to the Hunt Museum in November.

Mrs McAleese replied three days later saying she was precluded from comment under the Constitution. She has now passed the letter to the Taoiseach, who in turn has passed it to the Minister for Arts, Mr O'Donoghue. His spokesman said last night he had not yet received the letter.

The museum's director, Ms Virginia Teehon, said it would co-operate with any investigation into the Hunt collection.

Separately, *The Irish Times* has established that the board of the Hunt Museum commissioned a report, in the form of an essay, from Limerick-based art historian Ms Judith Hill in 1998 which claimed that John and Gertrude Hunt were active in the art market in post-war

Germany. The essay was never published and there was no investigation into any Nazi connection.

Dr Samuels said "sources" had indicated that John and Gertrude Hunt had "intimate business relationships with notorious dealers in art looted by the Nazis".

He declined last night to identify such dealers, but said work was in course on documentation. "When we're ready, we'll come out with it," he said.

He said in his letter to the President that the Hunts had "close personal ties" in the 1940s with Adolf Mahr, the Austrian Nazi who was then director of the National Museum of Ireland. In addition, the letter also alleged that the Hunts' arrival in Ireland in 1940 was "one step ahead of British suspicions of their alleged espionage".

Dr Samuels called on the museum to publish details about the museum's entire collection on the Internet so that eventual claimants could "scrutinise these objects in the manner of suspect art held by museums worldwide". Ms Teehon said she was willing to do this.

The museum's chairman, Mr George Stacpoole, rejected the allegations from the Wiesenthal Centre. "As far as I'm aware there are no problems whatsoever," he said. "In many ways I think it's unfair because no-one has come up with any facts."

Mr John Hunt jnr and Ms Trudi Hunt, son and daughter of the Hunts, told *The Irish Times* yes-



The President, Mrs McAleese, meets Ms Gwen Kelly, Raheny, Dublin, and her son Baldoyle, Co Dublin, a residential unit for children with physical and intellectual

terday that there was no foundation to the allegations. Mr John Hunt jnr said: "I have never heard anything remotely like that. I think it's bizarre. It's so over the top that I'm not concerned."

The essay commissioned by the museum board five years ago noted that the Hunts had made an extended visit to Germany in the 1940s.

Titled *John and Gertrude Hunt, Virtuoso Collectors and Benefactors*, it said: "Wide-scale Nazi thefts and the looting endemic in wars exacerbated the hazards of art dealing, causing many items to lose provenance: this too coloured the environment in which art changed hands in the mid-20th century. The Hunts fitted seamlessly into this world."

Mr John Hunt jnr and Ms Trudi Hunt received tax relief worth €762,000 in 1999 when they donated some of their own collection to the State.

Family dismisses 'Nazi Link' with art collection: **page 7**

Flynn accused of tax evasion helped by his daughter

MARK BRENNOCK,
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

The Taoiseach last night declined to comment on what the Labour Party described as astounding allegations of tax evasion by former minister Mr Pádraig Flynn, allegedly assisted by his daughter, sitting Fianna Fáil deputy Ms Beverley Cooper Flynn.

Labour's environment spokesman Mr Eamonn Gilmore last night demanded the Taoiseach respond to allegations he described as "among the most serious ever to have been made regarding any political figure in this country".

His demand followed a TV3 news report last night that the controversial €50,000 cheque given by developer Mr Tom Gilmartin to Mr Flynn in 1989 was lodged into a non-resident bank account in his and his wife's names, and half of this

was later invested offshore.

The Flynnns signed a declaration giving a false London address in order to avoid DIRT tax at a time when both were tax resident in Ireland, the report said.

The €25,000 was moved later in 1989, according to the report, into three offshore funds on the advice of the Flynn's daughter, Ms Beverley Cooper Flynn.

These funds were in the names of Mr Flynn, Mrs Dorothy Flynn and Ms Beverley Cooper Flynn, the report said. Ms Cooper Flynn advised her father in a letter that the investments would not be disclosed to the tax authorities.

According to the report, Ms Cooper Flynn maintains she had no beneficial interest in the money. She said last night the advice she gave was "totally above board".

Mr Gilmartin has said consistently that he intended the €50,000 as a donation to the Fianna Fáil

party. The Mahon tribunal is expected to begin hearing evidence on this and other allegations by Mr Gilmartin early this year.

In late 1998, Mr Gilmartin's assertion that he had given €50,000 to Mr Flynn began to circulate. Mr Flynn then declared the receipt of the money to the Revenue Commissioners, saying half was a gift to him and the remainder was to cover election expenses, the report said. However, the Revenue did not accept this, insisted on treating it all as a gift, and made a gift tax demand of €21,650, which Mr Flynn paid.

Mr Gilmore last night called on the Taoiseach to make an immediate statement on what action he intends to take on these "astounding allegations". However, asked by reporters to respond last night, Mr Ahern said: "I have not heard the full story. If anyone is guilty of tax evasion, that's a very serious matter."

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