# THE IRISH TIMES

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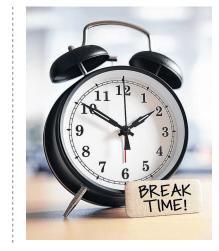
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**FENTON'S** FAREWELL **DUBS STAR TO RETIRE Gordon Manning Sports** 



Fianna Fáil and Fine **Gaelare going through the** motions of a spat. An old couple joined at the hip, spicing things up in front of the neighbours Fintan O'Toole **Opinion**&Analysis



**BEAT THE BURNOUT HOW TO TAKE A CAREER BREAK** WITHOUT GOING BROKE **Joanne Hunt Business** 

### Harris doubles down on defence of FG candidate McGahon in face of criticism

Taoiseach suggests criminal acquittal relevant rather than civil court damages Ten party leaders clash over issues including housing in RTÉ debate

### HARRY McGEE

Political Correspondent

Fine Gael has stepped up its defence of its Louth candidate John McGahon in the face of widespread criticism from rival parties over his suitability.

For a second day running, Taoiseach Simon Harris and senior colleagues were re-quired to defend the 34-year-old Senator following the emergence of video footage showing him striking a man several times in the head during a late-night incident in 2018.

Contemporaneous pictures of the victim, Breen White, showing extensive bruising on his face were also published in a newspaper on Sunday.

Mr Harris repeated his defence of the Senator in the 10-way leaders' debate on RTÉ last night.

Mr McGahon faced charges of assault causing harm arising out of the incident but was acquitted by a jury when the case came to trial in 2022.

However, in a civil action tak- Ivana Bacik, Labour; Richard n by Mr White a jury concluded in May 2024 that the Louth Profit; Mary Lou McDonald, Senator was 65 per cent respon- Sinn Féin. PHOTOGRAPH: NIALL sible for the assault. He was ordered to pay €39,000 in damages to the victim. He was selected as a candidate for the five-seat constituency after the civil case was concluded. Mr Harris argued that the didate should be based on the system in Ireland.' criminal and not civil courts.



From left: Joan Collins, Right to Change; Cian O'Callaghan, Social Democrats; Michael Collins, Independent Ireland; Micheál Martin, Fianna Fáil; Simon Harris, Fine Gael; RTÉ presenter Katie Hannon; Roderic O'Gorman, Green Party; Peadar Tóibín, Aontú; 'Very violent' Boyd Barrett, People Before

big parties, Fianna Fáil's seen on the video was a "vicious Micheál Martin and Sinn Féin's assault" Mary Lou McDonald, dis-

Mr Harris and senior missed Mr Harris's description colleagues, including Minister of the incident as a scuffle. for Public Expenditure and Both said separately that Mr Reform Paschal Donohoe and McGahon would not have been Minister for Justice Helen accepted as a candidate if he McEntee, continued to emphawere a member of their parties. sise the fact that Mr McGahon was acquitted by a jury of his

peers in interviews yesterday. about the staunch Mr McGahon did not re defence of Mr McGahon by the spond to requests for comment Taoiseach, Mr Martin replied: yesterday. There was no "I am surprised at his decision indication of his name being to double down on this withdrawn as a candidate as the deadline for nominations Commenting on the video footage, Ms McDonald said: "I closed. Social Democrats deputy leader Cian O'Callaghan deputhink it is very disturbing and very violent, a lot of blows to the tised for party leader Holly victim's head. It's very shocking Cairns in the debate. Ms Cairns is expecting her first child this to see anybody in public life weekend. Mr Martin said what he had Ten party leaders, including

Mr Harris, Mr Martin, Ms Mc-Donald and Mr O'Callaghan, as well as the Green Party's Roder-

ic O'Gorman, Labour's Ivana Bacik, Independent Ireland's Michael Collins, Aontú's Peadar Tóibín, People Before Profit's Richard Boyd Barrett and tion company t Joan Collins of Right to State-ownedland. Change, clashed over issues

including public spending, potential co

Gael, now is the time for change"

The Labour Party, meanwhile, launched its manifesto yesterday and pledged to spend €6 billion of the Apple tax fund to establish a State construction company to build on

General election 2024:

### Garda 'felt under pressure' before death, court told

Det Supt Colm Fox, who died by suicide in 2018, was investigating gang shooting

### FIACHRA GALLAGHER

Family members of a senior garda who died by suicide almost seven years ago have told his inquest of the intense pressure he was under during his investigation of the Regency Hotel shooting in 2016 and the subsequent trial.

Det Supt Colm Fox (56), who was found dead in his office in Ballymun Garda station on February 10th, 2018, was the senior investigating officer tasked with investigating the fatal attack at the hotel in Whitehall, north Dublin – a major escalation in a feud between the Kinahan and Hutch organised crime groups.

Edel Fox, the detective's widow, told Dublin District Coroner's Court yesterday that her husband was not sleeping and was eating poorly during the Special Criminal Court trial of Patrick Hutch, who was accused of murdering David Byrne, a Kinahan associate, at the Regency Hotel

on February 5th, 2016. Mr Hutch, of Champion's Avenue, Dublin 1, had pleaded not guilty to the charge, and subsequently walked free when the trial collapsed following Det Supt Fox's death. Ms Fox said that, from the

outset of the Regency Hotel shooting investigation, her husband was under pressure from commissioners.

On the evening of February 3rd, 2018, while the trial was ongoing, Ms Fox said that she found Det Supt Fox in a distressed state at their home in Malahide, north Co Dublin, and that he "did not seem rational". She said she "knew it had something to do with the trial".

Ms Fox said Det Supt Fox told her "I may have made a mistake", but that she had no idea what this meant, because he was not making sense.

"That was like some kind of a turning point," Ms Fox said. 'I nearly felt like something broke in him that night."

Sgt Michael Ryan told the inquest that on the morning of his death, Det Supt Fox called him into his office in Ballymun Garda station, where they had a "general" conversation about the Regency Hotel trial.

Sgt Ryan said the detective said if he was to "do it all again", that he would "do some things differently", although he did not elaborate on his comment.

David Fox, Det Supt Fox's son, told the inquest that the trial was "hard" for his father who was seeing "his lads" - a reference to his Garda colleagues - being "torn apart", and "there was nothing he could do about it". The inquest continues.

Family recalls

CARSON/PA WIRE

"The jury looked at all of the footage and a judge looked at all the footage and a jury acquitted him," he said. "That has to be the standard that we hold in standard for suitability as a can- terms of our criminal justice

But leaders of the other two

nousing tions in a debate moderated by Katie Hannon

### Ruled out coalition

Both Mr Martin and Mr Harris ruled out coalition with Sinn Féin.

Asked if Sinn Féin has a credible path to government if the two other large parties are ruling it out, Ms McDonald made an argument that "after a

century of Fianna Fáil and Fine

page 12

pages 2&3; Opinion,

"Colm felt under n to progress the investigation, she said

immediately before his death: page 4

### Press Up co-founder taken to court over €1.2m loans

a 1,500-capacity event venue.

of which Mr McKillen inr is a di-

The loans were made to Crea-

candidature.'

behave like that.'

A property investment finance len jnr to the fast track commerthe loans to buy a property in England for development as a hotel and venue.

Mr McKillen jnr is a co-founder of Ireland's largest hospitality group, Press Up, and son of well-known developer Paddy McKillen snr.

Investment finance firm AHG Properties Unlimited Company applied yesterday to Mr Justice Denis McDonald to admit its summary judgment proceedings against Mr McKil-

company is seeking judgment cial list. After hearing the for almost €1.2 million against defendant had requested an businessman Paddy McKillen adjournment, the judge jnr over a guarantee he gave on adjourned the matter for two weeks

#### **Personal** guarantee

Street in Birmingham.

In an affidavit seeking admission of the proceedings to the Commercial Court, AHG director Tony O'Shea said Mr McKillen jnr had provided a personal guarantee, limited to €1 million plus interest, on loans totalling €10 million to buy The Central Hall and adjoining buildings in Corporation Street/Ryder

However, he said, as the final repayment date approached on

The plan was to redevelop it December 30th, 2023, Creative as a 155-bed "Dean" hotel with Cedar sought an extension to April to allow for discussions regarding the potential refinanctive Cedar Ltd, a UK company ing of the AHG facility.

#### Refinancing deal rector and also part of the Press

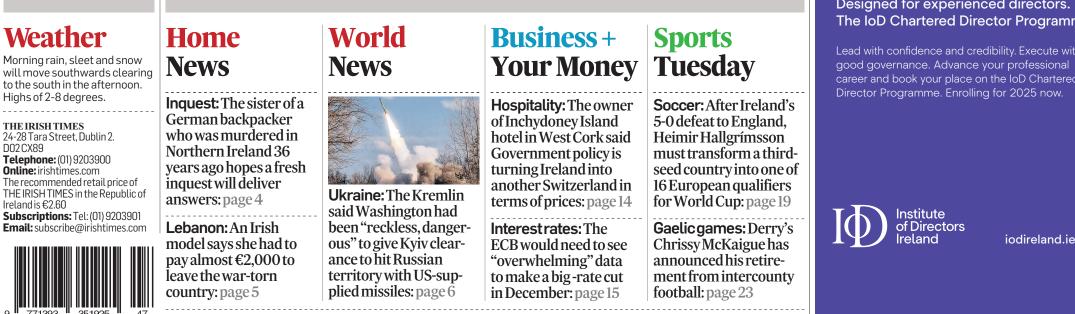
Up Group. Mr O'Shea said he There followed a number of exalways understood the AHG changes and a meeting with Mr facility, provided in 2022 and McKillen jnr in March in which 2023 in two tranches of €9 milit was learned that the sale of Dean hotels in Ireland and other Press Up hotels had concluded but had not resulted in enough equity to repay AHG. A proposed refinancing deal would also leave redevelopment plans €15 million short.

There followed further corre-

spondence and a meeting with Mr McKillen jnr after which AHG advised the defendant it was reserving its rights under the loan agreement and evaluating enforcement options. Mr O'Shea said he visited the

Birmingham property on September 25th to find it had deteriorated significantly since he visited in 2021.

On September 30th, AHG notified Creative Cedar that €12.5 million was now due on the loan facility, including interest. It also made a formal demand of Mr McKillen jnr to repay €1.198 million under his personal guarantee for the loan.



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#### lion and €1 million, was principally to buy the Birmingham property and that it would be subsequently refinanced by development finance from a separate lender.