

Important Note: Dates hereunder do not denote the actual dates on which the respective events occur, but refer to the dates on which they are reported in the local print media, which is normally on the morrow.

JANUARY

- **2 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi called on the Maltese to seize the opportunities which the new year was bound to offer, particularly as Malta's euro adoption neared. The Prime Minister was speaking at the President's Palace in Valletta where he and his Cabinet exchanged New Year's greetings with President Edward Fenech-Adami.
- **2 January 2007** Statistics have once again placed Malta among the safest countries to live in, with no murders reported last year. According to police historian Eddie Attard, Malta's average murder rate for the past 20 years was 5.3 a year, placing the island in the "very low" category. "This is further confirmed by the rate of 1.4 per 100,000 population, as in Britain, Canada, Belgium, Ireland, Japan and Luxemburg, which have some of the lowest rates," Mr Attard said.
- **2 January 2007** Health, Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara, accompanied by his wife Maria and a number of hospital officials, visited mothers who had babies over the last few days and those expecting to give birth very soon.
- **3 January 2007** Voice traffic from mobile phones has increased by nearly a quarter, underlining Malta's persistent growth in mobile telephony. Mobile traffic grew by 23.3% for the six months ending September 30 over the same period in 2005, according to the Malta Communications Authority's electronic communications market review. The report shows that the mobile subscriptions base grew by 6.1 %, bringing the local penetration rate to 86%. Though above the rate in France, Malta still ranks below the EU average of 100.4%.
- **3 January 2007** Malta has just experienced the second warmest December since the Meteorological Office started keeping records in 1922. The mercury averaged 16°C and the highest temperature was 20.3°C. On December 5, 1963, the thermometer had peaked at 24.3°C. Nights last month were 2.2°C warmer than average, reaching 17.6°C. The coldest was Christmas night at 10.1°C.
- **4 January 2007** The Crowne Plaza, in Sliema, will be sold for Lm23.3 million and, in addition, the government will also get Lm1.1 million in stamp duty from the sale. The promise of sale agreement was signed at the end of December, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech within the Ministry of Finance said. The Lands Department signed the agreement with Imperial Point Co. Ltd, which was the highest bidder when a call for offers was made last year.
- **4 January 2007** The Treasury has published an indicative calendar of the annual programme of Government Securities issues. The calendar is meant to assist investors gain a better insight into what investment opportunities will be available during the current year. It also helps other prospective issuers to plan the timing of their issues in order to avoid undue pressures on the market.
- **4 January 2007** Lm824,600 were spent by the 76,000-odd people who visited Valletta during the first edition of Notte Bianca last October, Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said citing a post-evaluation exercise conducted by the Research and Business Planning Unit of the Malta Tourism

Authority. Dr Zammit Dimech was speaking during the presentation of a sponsorship cheque by Sally Robson, HSBC's chief operating officer, in connection with Saturday's Notte Magica in Valletta.

- **5 January 2007** Mattia Preti's painting of St George on Horseback, found at the chapel of the Aragonese Langue at St John's Co-Cathedral, in Valletta, has taken on added significance following a study by Sandro Debono, who concluded that it depicts a famous battle in the 13th century. Mr Debono, a senior curator at Heritage Malta, has concluded that a detail of the painting depicts the 1238 battle at El Puig de Santa Maria, the Hill of St Mary, about eight miles from Valencia.
- **5 January 2007** The next Commonwealth summit scheduled to be held in Uganda in November will discuss the tangible results achieved by the Commonwealth Connects Programme agreed to in Malta last year, which aims to bridge the digital divide across the Commonwealth. The programme is being piloted by Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo who was appointed by Commonwealth secretary general Don McKinnon to chair the steering committee of the Commonwealth Action Programme On The Digital Divide.
- **5 January 2006** The Government is planning a new facility for the elderly close to St Vincent de Paul residence to cope with an increase in demand for geriatric services brought about by an ageing population. At a press conference Health, the Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara indicated that the authorities will have to create 100 new beds each year for the next 10 years.
- **5 January 2006** The average temperature last year stood at 19.4°C, that is 0.3°C warmer than the average for the past 30 years, making 2006 one of the warmest since the Meteorological Office, now forming part of Malta International Airport plc, started operating in 1922.
- **5 January 2006** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi has accepted an invitation to open the new headquarters of UK passenger transport group Fraser Eagle in Lancashire. Fraser Eagle will use the opportunity to discuss further opportunities to invest in Malta after establishing a control centre in Mosta at the beginning of 2006, which now employs 30 people.
- **6 January 2006** Management text books are being donated to various organisations by the European Institute of Education (EIE). This is part of a campaign called Knowledge For All, meant to highlight the importance of continuing professional development for professionals in various spheres.
- **6 January 2006** The Gozo Coronary Care Unit Monitors Foundation was launched this week by a group of people with the support of the Gozo Hospital and the Ministry for Gozo with the aim of replacing the monitoring equipment at the Gozo Hospital's Coronary Care Unit.
- **6 January 2007** Embellishment works on the stretch of the Victoria-San Lawrenz road have reached their final stages and the final surface of tarmac has just been laid. The works, one of the first infrastructural projects to be taken in hand through EU funds, are also being carried out on the roundabout at the Ghasri junction. The roundabout was built to ensure a secure traffic flow on the way to and from the villages of Ghasri, Gharb and San Lawrenz.
- **6 January 2007** A diving master plan for Gozo and Comino was presented to the island's diving tourism stakeholders at the Ministry for Gozo. The plan forms part of the EU co-funded Niche Tourism Project For The Island Of Gozo. Recommendations include the upgrading of shore dive sites, parking and kitting up facilities, the provision of safety equipment and the improvement of facilities to reduce accidents, and the provision of more wrecks and artificial reefs.

- **7 January 2007** Malta is insisting with its European partners to put the dialogue between the European Union and the League of Arab States on a more formal and structured platform, ensuring a wider ranging engagement on the challenges that affect the region. Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo, who launched the idea at a Gymnich meeting in early September, has now written to Frank- Walter Steinmeier, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, which currently holds the Presidency of the European Union, underlining the importance of the initiative.
- **7 January 2007** Though Notte Magica was different from Notte Bianca in that it specifically focused on local musical genre, thousands responded to the invitation to end the festive season by touring the historic auberges housing the country's institutions, which are shut to the public most of the year.
- **7 January 2007** The history of sharing and exchange that epitomises the Mediterranean as well as the proximity of nation states within it make the idea of a clash of civilisations not only outlandish but counterproductive, President Emeritus Guido de Marco told youngsters from all over the region on Friday during a Euromed Movement Malta activity. Professor de Marco was referring to the book Clash of Civilisations by Samuel Huntington in which the author argues that people's cultural and religious identity will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world.
- **8 January 2007** The Tourism and Culture Ministry is planning to hold a Notte Bianca in Gozo, possibly at the start of summer, Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said in the wake of another successful event in Valletta last Saturday night. It was also proof that "Malta's future belongs to culture and the arts", according to Dr Zammit Dimech, whose ministry was responsible for the organisation of the event.
- **9 January 2007** A think-tank has been set up to formulate a road map for the future of culture in Malta and to contribute to the development of a national cultural policy. The Valletta Creative Forum was launched at St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity. The project is being developed in collaboration with the Culture and Tourism Ministry and the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, with the support of the British Council.
- **9 January 2007** The European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) has designated 2007 as European Year of Equal Opportunities For All. In a statement the Commission said "The Year" is one of the most significant initiatives within the framework of a wider strategy to give momentum to the fight against discrimination in the EU.
- **9 January 2007** Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said that the new law on voluntary organisations reflected the government's support for this sector and its commitment to see it grow further. Speaking at the opening of the debate on the Voluntary Organisations Bill in Parliament, Mrs Cristina paid tribute to the service given by voluntary organisations.
- **9 January 2007** The Housing Authority has set aside Lm2 million for use on a new scheme where it will assist those acquiring their first residence from the private sector, chairman Marisa Micallef has said. Writing in the authority's annual report, Ms Micallef said there had been strong interest in the shared ownership scheme launched by the authority last year.
- **9 January 2007** Only Lm80.6 million out of a total of Lm412.4 million reported by ministries and departments as arrears of revenue for 2005 are expected to be collected, according to the Report of the Auditor General for 2005 which was laid on the table of the House of Representative.
- **9 January 2007** A total of 403 cases of domestic violence were reported to the Appogg agency between January and November last year. Family and

Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said in reply to a parliamentary question that there were 42 women and 43 children living in shelters for victims of domestic violence run by Appogg.

- **10 January 2007** A group of 19 Nigerian illegal immigrants, 18 of them male, were repatriated. Some of them were about to complete their 18 months in detention while the others had completed the detention period. They had all been refused refugee status. The immigrants left for Nigeria from the cargo section at the old airport on an Italian aircraft which had left Italy with another 20 Nigerian illegal immigrants aboard. On their way home they were accompanied by Italian and Maltese police.
- **10 January 2007** Heritage Malta has been accepted as a full member of the European Network of Conservation and Restoration Education at ENCoRE's sixth general assembly held recently in Maastricht, the Netherlands.
- **10 January 2007** The President of Malta and Mrs Fenech-Adami called on President Emeritus Sir Anthony Mamo who celebrated his 98th birthday. Dr Fenech-Adami said all past presidents tried to emulate Sir Anthony and expressed the hope that he would visit Casa Arkati again to congratulate him on his 100th birthday.
- **10 January 2007** The Malta Tourism Authority has appointed Chris Fenech as its director for the UK and Ireland. He will run the authority's office in London and oversee the implementation of MTA's strategic and promotional plans.
- **11 January 2007** The Curia has released the new coat of arms of Archbishop-elect Mgr Paul Cremona. It represents the surnames of Mgr Cremona's parents, red for Cremona and blue for Cauchi; the Dominican Order, a black cape on a white habit; and a white palium with black crosses, which is the traditional symbol of the grade and authority given to new archbishops by the Pope on June 29, the feast of St Peter and St Paul. The coat of arms also includes a green ecclesiastical hat and 10 tassels on each side, a symbol of the Archbishop's authority. At the back is the eight-pointed Maltese Cross, which indicates the nationality of the Archbishop, and the Patriarchal Cross.
- **11 January 2007** The general government deficit for the third quarter of 2006 amounted to Lm1.9 million, compared to a deficit of Lm2.7 million in the same period in 2005, the National Statistics Office said. Total expenditure increased by Lm7.8 million (mainly due to higher outlays on social benefits and on interest payments) while recurrent revenue rose by Lm8.6 million. With an increase of Lm6.1 million, taxes on income and wealth were the main contributors to revenue.
- **11 January 2007** Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Self-Employed Edwin Vassallo said in Parliament that business activity was going strong in Malta but this was a fragile sector and there was no room for complacency or resting on one's laurels. Mr Vassallo was concluding a debate in Parliament - which started three months ago - on the sector of the self-employed in Malta.
- **11 January 2007** Two members of the Egyptological Society of Malta are promoting the theory that the many ancient Egyptian artefacts unearthed in Malta were brought over by the Egyptians themselves, and not, as commonly thought, by traders. In an article titled *Did The Ancient Egyptians Ever Reach Malta?*, published in the Egyptian Egyptological journal, Anton Mifsud and Marta Farrugia analysed Egyptian artefacts found here and went through old and recently published material on which to base their conclusions.
- **12 January 2007** Malta International Airport plc has appointed Julian Jaeger chief commercial officer. He will be undertaking the airline's marketing, the development of cargo traffic and passenger hub, the land development project, the cruise and fly business and the concession and retail sector.

- **12 January 2007** An independent survey has shown that 94% of letters posted in Malta to an address in Malta or Gozo last November were delivered on the next day, 3% were delivered after two days and 3% after three days, Industry, Investment and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said. He said the quality of service by Maltapost was surveyed every month by an independent consultant approved by the Malta Communications Authority.
- **12 January 2007** The gainfully occupied increased by 397 last August while unemployment dropped by five compared to the same month in 2005, the National Statistics Office said. Labour market data for August 2006 provided by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) indicate that the labour supply increased by 392 persons over the same month in the preceding year.
- **12 January 2007** The final decision on whether Malta will be able to adopt the euro by the beginning of next year is expected to be taken under the Portuguese presidency, according to a senior official of the German Ministry of Finance. The official said that although Germany would have liked the issue to be dealt with during its presidency, the timing of the actual process to be followed according to EU rules makes this unlikely.
- **12 January 2007** The hard standing facility for trawlers at Ponta Tal-Qrejten, in Marsaxlokk is nearing completion and should be ready for use by the beginning of March, the government said. Rural Affairs and Environment Minister George Pullicino visited the facility, which is designed to enable fishermen to carry out maintenance work on their trawlers on land.
- **12 January 2007** Heritage Malta has been entrusted with the leadership of an EU-funded initiative that promotes the study and understanding of various facets of Mediterranean maritime history. The project, titled Route des Marchands, Ville Des Marchés En Méditerranée (MERCATOR) brings together six countries and various institutions that will be sharing and promoting information on merchants and merchant cities in Europe.
- **13 January 2007** Maltese tour operators are taking part in a workshop with Tunisian tour operators to discuss new areas of cooperation between Malta and Tunisia, including the targeting of niche markets. The tour operators are accompanying Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech who is on an official visit to Tunis as a guest of his Tunisian counterpart Tidjani Haddad.
- **13 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi opened the £1.8 million new headquarters of Fraser Eagle, forging an even closer relationship with the British group that has made Malta its second home.
- **14 January 2007** President Edward Fenech-Adami appealed to the authorities to approve the necessary repair works needed on the stretch of road leading from Corradino Road to the Physically Handicapped Rehabilitation Centre at Corradino. The President, who was speaking at the centre during the annual Christmas party, said that the PHRF has presented a detailed report to the Malta Community Chest Fund of their urgent needs that required attention.
- **14 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi visited Hapton Primary School, during his stay in Lancashire where he was invited to open the new Fraser Eagle headquarters. The children sang the Maltese National Anthem in English and in turn Dr Gonzi presented certificates to the best performers of the week. Dr Gonzi was accompanied by his wife, Kate Gonzi.
- **14 January 2007** Environmental priorities of the German presidency of the Council of the European Union were discussed in Malta between a representative of the German government, Karsten Sach, deputy director-general for international co-operation at the German Ministry for the Environment and Conservation, and Maltese government officials. Dr Sach

expressed satisfaction at the action taken by the Maltese government over the climate change issue.

- **14 January 2007** Over 100 Gozitan voluntary and non-governmental organisations were given a total of Lm14,500 in grants by the Ministry for Gozo during a presentation held last Friday. Minister Giovanna Debono presented cheques to organisations hailing from the social, cultural and philanthropic areas who qualified for assistance given through the ministry's annual scheme to support such endeavours.
- **14 January 2007** The National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) has appointed Jacques Sciberras as the new chief executive officer, tasked with setting up a secretariat. The secretariat will be responsible for research, technical appraisal and executive support for the NCHE.
- **14 January 2007** The Ghaqda Maltija tat-Tobba ghall-Emergenza (Association of Emergency Physicians of Malta, GMTE/AEPM) has been set up, and its council has already met to start developing a strategy to fulfil the association's aspirations and goals
- **15 January 2007** Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Finance Tonio Fenech was in Slovenia to take part in the country's celebrations marking euro adoption. Guests included German Chancellor Angela Merkel as President of the European Council, EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Central Bank president Jean-Claude Trichet.
- **15 January 2007** In a global e-mail petition urging the United Nations' Security Council to order a ceasefire in Lebanon last year, signatures from Malta constituted the highest percentage of population among 150 countries whose citizens signed the petition. The petition was delivered to the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General and the US and other governments by campaigners from CeasefireCampaign.org in August 2006, just before the council had passed a resolution demanding a ceasefire in the Lebanese-Israeli conflict.
- **15 January 2007** Gozo seems to have left an impact on British holidaymakers and for the second consecutive week, Malta's sister island has been ranked as a top destination in London's The Sunday Times' Travel Supplement. The edition of the newspaper included Ramla l-Hamra among its top 20 beach holidays in an article by travel writer Mark Hodson.
- **16 January 2007** The new divorce rules being proposed by the EU are only intended to bring about legal certainty and are in no way proposing divorce through the back door, the head of the EU permanent representation in Malta Joanna Drake has underlined. The proposed law is only intended to make citizens' lives easier by establishing a common set of rules to decide which law is applicable in the case of an international divorce, according to Dr Drake, a lawyer by profession and an expert in EU law.
- **16 January 2007** Maltese are the most sceptical EU citizens on the role the Union should play in matters concerning cross-border divorce legislation, with the majority expecting the EU not to involve itself in the question. This emerged in Brussels with the publication of a new Eurobarometer survey conducted in Malta by Misco last July, when the controversy raised by European Commission proposals to regulate cross-border divorce legislation had not yet surfaced.
- **16 January 2007** The Housing Authority is currently building 460 new apartments and maisonettes and 500 garages at a cost of Lm11 million and is about to award contracts for a further 200 apartments, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina told Parliament. Speaking at the opening of a two-day debate on the estimates of the authority, Mrs Cristina said the

authority, however, was increasingly active in urban regeneration and was helping people move into existing vacant dwellings.

- **16 January 2007** There were 339 deaths between January and November last year believed to have been caused by smoking, Health, the Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara said. Replying to a parliamentary question, the minister said 239 of the victims were men and the rest women.
- **16 January 2007** The Education Division has 1,076 learning support assistants, namely 293 facilitators, 99 kindergarten assistants and 684 supply kindergarten assistants, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in reply to parliamentary questions.
- **16 January 2007** A television spot to remind people that passive smoking kills started being aired on 80 channels, including TVM, around the 27 EU countries. Around 19,000 European non-smokers die annually because of passive smoking, European Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianu stressed.
- **16 January 2007** The Maltese Embassy in Tunisia has organised a month-long exhibition of Maltese artists and artifacts, Malta Hanina, in Tunis to promote Maltese culture and identity. Housed at the Musée de la Ville de Tunis - Palais Kheireddine, the project is being financed and coordinated by the Tourism and Culture Ministry and the Malta Tourism Authority, and remains open until February 10.
- **16 January 2007** BirdLife Malta has welcomed the decision taken by the European Union to ban the trade of wild birds. The wild bird trade was temporarily banned in the EU in October 2005 after birds at an Essex quarantine centre in the UK were found to have bird flu. It was made permanent by the EU's chief veterinary officers at a meeting in Brussels last week because of fears for human and animal health.
- **16 January 2007** Drivers and passengers of quadricycles, including quad bikes, must now wear crash helmets under new regulations just published in the Government Gazette.
- **16 January 2007** Nearly 16,500 Maltese residents went abroad in November, a 31.5% increase over the same month in 2005, figures released by the National Statistics Office show. Apart from the 2,850 more passengers that travelled out of the island by air there was also a notable increase in travel by sea - the number of passengers more than tripled between November 2005 and the same month last year.
- **17 January 2007** Crime has gone up by 25% in the eight years between 1998 and 2005, figures released by the National Statistics Office show. The figures, published in the demographic review for 2005, show an almost constant increase, from 14,793 crimes committed in 1998 to 18,500 in 2005.
- **17 January 2007** Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said that she would be meeting a Church commission which recently issued a statement critical of high property prices. Mrs Cristina told Parliament during the debate on the Housing Authority that she had welcomed the commission's report and was looking forward to discussing its various points and hearing what the commission was proposing to ease current problems.
- **17 January 2007** Officials from the Veterinary and Fisheries Section of the Rural Affairs Ministry conducted a surprise inspection on the Bellucci Circus in Floriana on Boxing Day and concluded that the animals were adequately taken care of, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said. The inspection was made to ensure that the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act were being observed, the minister said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **17 January 2007** European Union justice ministers discussed at length the issues raised by various member states, including Malta, over a new proposal submitted by the European Commission last July to streamline the jurisdiction of European courts over divorce legislation and international marriages. Speaking at the conclusion of an informal Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Dresden, Germany, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said Malta's position has been recognised and the German presidency promised that a solution will be found.
- **17 January 2007** German MEP Hans-Gert Poettering, who until last week was the leader of the European People's Party, was elected president of the European Parliament for the next two and a half years. He obtained 450 votes or 65% of all the votes cast.
- **17 January 2007** Malta's population grew to 404,346 by the end of 2005, according to figures in the National Statistics Office's demographic review. The country's population increased by 1,678 in 2005, the NSO said.
- **18 January 2007** Three new magistrates were sworn in at the Palace, in Valletta. The new magistrates are Doreen Clarke, Edwina Grima and Anthony Ellul. All three are under 40 and were chairmen of the Small Claims Tribunal. President Edward Fenech-Adami said the judiciary was one of the pillars of a democratic republic. The fact that the new magistrates were young was positive and meant that the younger generation included persons possessing credibility and wisdom who deserved to occupy such senior positions.
- **18 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi spoke to around 150 members of the Maltese community during his visit in Rome. Dr Gonzi also said it would be fitting if the Pope made the visit to Malta to complete the cause for sainthood of the Blessed Dun Gorg Preca.
- **18 January 2007** Malta's annual inflation rate has continued to decline and is now significantly below the euro entry reference rate, new statistics show. Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, reported that in December, Malta registered a monthly inflation annual average of just 0.8%, the lowest rate among the 27 member states.
- **18 January 2007** The National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD), the University of Malta and Mcast have launched a pilot project aimed at making it easier for persons with disability and other socially-disadvantaged groups to take up university and tertiary studies. They have teamed up and are cooperating within the framework of APT-Leonardo - Access to Professional Training for Persons with Disability, a project funded by the EU programme Leonardo da Vinci.
- **18 January 2007** The Ombudsman, Joseph Said Pullicino, proposed that the Constitution should include an article recognising the right of the people to good administration. Dr Said Pullicino told the House Business Committee that in a letter to the Speaker he had proposed that this right, which was acknowledged and defined both in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the treaty establishing the Constitution for Europe, should be included in the Bill currently before the House, which will introduce the Ombudsman in the Constitution
- **18 January 2007** The total number of visits to the Malta Tourism Authority's destination website www.visitmalta.com reached 3,946,750 last year, an increase of 68% over the previous year, the MTA said.
- **18 January 2007** The sum of Lm14,500 was distributed among more than 100 Gozitan NGOs in an event held at the Ministry for Gozo. Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono wished the organisations another full year of work for the benefit of society at large and thanked members of the Association for Gozo

Non Governmental Organisations who held their third Annual General Meeting on the same occasion.

- **19 January 2007** President Edward Fenech-Adami thanked Archbishop Mgr Joseph Mercieca for his pastoral work over the past 30 years. He said in a letter he could personally vouch for the prudence, wisdom, determination and serenity with which Mgr Mercieca did his pastoral duty. This counted for difficult times and for times of happiness such as the two pastoral visits by Pope John Paul II and the proclamation of the first three Maltese Blessed.
- **19 January 2007** Pope Benedict XVI told the Prime Minister during a 15-minute meeting in his private library he would do his best to fit a visit to Malta into schedule, but did not commit himself to any date. Dr Gonzi then presented the Pontiff with a silver bas-relief of Caravaggio's famous painting the Beheading of St John, and in turn received a gift from the pope – a pen in the form of one of the four columns that supports the main altar in St Peter's Basilica.
- **19 January 2007** Adrian Mamo has been appointed chairman of the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA) by Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech. He succeeds Hans Cauchi.
- **19 January 2007** A total of 772,424 passengers used the Malta-Gozo ferries in the fourth quarter of last year, an increase of 7.6% over the same period the previous year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **19 January 2007** The volume of waste taken to landfills last year was 4,000 tonnes less than that deposited there the previous year, a drop of 3%, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said. Speaking at Maghtab during the inauguration of the first of five civic amenity sites, Mr Pullicino said the drop was in spite of Malta having a growing economy that generated an increasing amount of waste. He said the civic amenity sites would make it even more possible to reduce the waste taken to landfills.
- **20 January 2007** Further progress towards a vision of a united Europe can only be made if it enjoys significant popular support among Europe's citizens, President Edward Fenech-Adami said during the Exchange of New Year Greetings with the Diplomatic Corps at The Palace, Valletta. Addressing ambassadors accredited to Malta, Dr Fenech-Adami said Europe is a continent with a long history of competing nation states, and for this reason "it can only be successfully united if public opinion is prepared by means of a democratic debate and only if the decision-makers, thanks to such a public discussion, know how far they can go, and at what pace"
- **20 January 2007** Malta today has 44 double taxation treaties in force, 24 of them with European Union member states and the rest are with OECD countries and emerging economies. Parliamentary Secretary at the Finance Ministry, Tonio Fenech said that another 10 treaties are in various stages of negotiation, including one with the United States, which, it was hoped, will be concluded in the near future. He was speaking at the opening of a conference on double taxation organised by the Malta Institute of Management.
- **20 January 2007** Malta remains supportive of the prospect of further expansion of the European Union, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi told accredited ambassadors to Malta during the traditional exchange of New Year greetings at Auberge de Castille, in Valletta. An audio recording of the address can be accessed on the following link:
<http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/News/newsitems/audiorecording%20-%2019.01.07diplomaticcorps.asp>

- **20 January 2007** Visitors to Malta will now be able to book flights, hotels and other services through the VisitMalta portal, Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said. For the past five years, the Malta Tourism Authority promoted Malta through its website www.visitmalta.com which is visited daily by 11,000 people, the minister added.
- **20 January 2007** The Retail Price Index last month remained unchanged at 109.88, the National Statistics Office said. The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 2.77% last month, compared to 3.01% in November.
- **20 January 2007** The Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, Francis Agius, said that despite the fact that the market was open to foreign products, surveys show that consumers preferred to buy Maltese fresh products. Dr Agius was speaking when he inaugurated an exhibition of processed food products organised by the Regional Province of Agrigento of Sicily at Le Meridien Phoenicia, in Floriana.
- **20 January 2007** Anna Borg is the new chairman of the Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations. She succeeds Romina Bartolo.
- **20 January 2007** The government, through the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), has invested over Lm2 million in the Employment Exposure Scheme (TEES), through which 460 Maltese workers aged over 40 and who were on the unemployment register were able to undergo a training programme. 65% of these workers are today gainfully occupied with a few opening up their own business, Louis Galea, Minister for Education, Youth and Employment, said on Thursday during a ceremony in which successful participants in the TEES were presented with their certificate.
- **20 January 2007** Restoration work on the church dedicated to St Catherine, in Zejtun, better known as St Gregory church, is expected to be completed at the cost of more than Lm30,000, next month. Resources and Infrastructure Minister Ninu Zammit visited the site and saw how the church, which was in a good state but which had started to show signs of deterioration, was restored to avoid further damage.
- **21 January 2007** Forty-seven shops became the first participants of the FAIR scheme, a voluntary dual pricing system for retail establishments that aims at ensuring a smooth changeover to the euro. The FAIR sticker, likely to become a common feature at many shops in the run-up to euro conversion, was distributed personally to seven of the shop owners in Valletta by Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech and National Euro Changeover Committee chairman Joseph F.X. Zahra.
- **21 January 2007** January 30 is the last day of the season for the hunting of birds on land and at sea and for the trapping of songbirds under Legal Notice 79 of 2006, the Rural Affairs and Environment Ministry said.
- **21 January 2007** Over 50,000 people visited Valletta for It-Tre Re - Notte Magica on January 6, spending Lm853,500 between them, Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech told a news conference. Dr Zammit Dimech said that although attendance was lower than for Notte Bianca when 62,000 people turned up, more money was spent because of greater retail activity.
- **21 January 2007** The Council of Europe is marking the golden jubilee of the creation of its Conference of Local Authorities of Europe representing regional and local authorities from around its 46 member states. Dr Ian Micallef, currently president of the Local Authorities' Chamber of the Council of Europe, said in a statement issued in Strasbourg that the past 50 years has been crucial from bringing democracy closer to the citizens.

- **22 January 2006** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi urged workers to analyse the increases in their pay cheque at the end of the month, thanks to the reduction in income tax. The 2007 budget will leave nearly Lm18 million in people's pockets and, yet, the government still plans to trim the deficit further and qualify for the euro. Dr Gonzi was speaking during a political activity in Sannat.
- **22 January 2006** President Edward Fenech-Adami described Lija as a small village with a big history and identity, during an official visit. Accompanied by his wife, Dr Fenech-Adami visited the St Pio X band club and football nurseries, among other venues.
- **22 January 2006** Malta is the only EU member state that registered a drop in air traffic passengers during 2005, according to data released in Brussels. According to Eurostat, the 25 EU member states increased air passengers by an average of 8.5% when compared to 2004, with the only exception being Malta.
- **22 January 2007** The role of the EU drugs agency, EMCDDA, has been broadened after a new mission statement was adopted to help the centre respond to new challenges in the sphere of drugs across Europe. The agency will be playing a more active role in monitoring new drug use patterns and emerging trends, after the European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted the new mission statement last week.
- **23 January 2007** Talks with Tecom Investments on SmartCity Malta have been successfully concluded, the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology announced. Following a detailed presentation in the morning by Minister Austin Gatt, the Cabinet approved the terms of the agreement and authorised the Minister to close negotiations and proceed with the completion of the documentation required for parliamentary scrutiny.
- **23 January 2007** About 300 Punic and Phoenician artefacts collected by a Qormi blacksmith in the early 20th century were donated to Heritage Malta. The collection - dating back to pre-Christian times - was donated by Joseph Sammut, nephew of Ganni Sammut who until his death in 1958 collected objects unearthed by building contractors with whom he had business deals.
- **23 January 2007** Cruise passenger traffic increased by 27.4% last year over 2005, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said that cruise passenger traffic in December alone amounted to 5,279, bringing the total for the year to 408,046.
- **23 January 2007** The role of voluntary organisations remained under Parliament's spotlight during the continuation of the debate on the Voluntary Organisations Bill. Parliamentary Secretary within the Office of the Prime Minister Tony Abela said the voluntary sector was strong and helped to hold Maltese society together.
- **23 January 2007** The running costs of the Park and Ride scheme were Lm27,678 for November and December, Minister for Urban Development and Roads Jesmond Mugliett said reply to a parliamentary question. He said the introduction of controlled vehicular access to Valletta in March was expected to bring down costs to Lm9,500.
- **23 January 2007** A total of 1,899 persons were found working irregularly last year, of whom 175 were foreigners, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in reply to a parliamentary question .
- **23 January 2007** Malta made several representations to Libya during bilateral meetings appealing against the death penalty imposed on a Palestinian doctor and Bulgarian nurses who had been accused of infecting children with

the HIV virus, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo said in Parliament. Malta also participated in discussions on the subject within EU fora. Malta's position against the death penalty was well known, Dr Frendo said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **23 January 2007** The constitutional amendment through which changes will be made to the electoral laws has been drafted and is expected to be presented to Parliament after the two major parties approve it. Through an agreement reached by the Nationalist Party and the Labour Party, Gozo will be considered as a single electoral district, and if only two parties make it to Parliament, there will be strict proportionality of seats in relation to first-count votes won.
- **23 January 2007** Sixty-two psychologists were given their warrants at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta in a first for these professionals. During the ceremony, Family and Social Solidarity minister Dolores Cristina congratulated the psychologists, who were given warrants in seven areas of specialisation.
- **23 January 2007** Consuls accredited to Malta pledged to bring over at least one business mission to Malta each this year from the countries they represent. The consular corp, led by Maurice Mizzi, exchanged New Year greetings with President Edward Fenech-Adami, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo.
- **23 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi acknowledged the pledge made by the Consuls adding that the idea was encouraging, particularly at this juncture of Malta's development. Dr Gonzi also reiterated his confidence in Malta's ability to enter the euro-zone in 2008, saying that the country had managed to reduce the deficit from some 10% in 2003, then also fed by the Drydock's reform, to under 3% this year. The Prime Minister was speaking during the exchange of New Year Greetings with the Consuls accredited to Malta. An audio recording of the address can be accessed on the following link: <http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/News/newsitems/audiorecording%20-%2023.01.07pmdc.asp>
- **24 January 2007** Malta's name was officially cleared by a European Parliament committee appointed to investigate claims that the United States, through the CIA, has used various EU member states for illegal rendition flights. Malta had been mentioned as one of the possible EU member states involved. The international press had given details of CIA flights using the airport in Gudja for refuelling US aircraft used on these missions.
- **24 January 2007** EU solutions on immigration must take into account Malta's size, its limited resources and the fact that it is responsible for a vast search and rescue area disproportionate to its territory, German Ambassador Karl Andreas von Stenglin said. The Ambassador was outlining the plans of the forthcoming EU Presidency, currently held by his country, at a public dialogue meeting organised by the German embassy and Forum Malta fl-Ewropa.
- **24 January 2007** In three years' time engineering graduates and others working in the field will be able to start a European Masters degree in heat treatment and surface engineering coordinated by the University of Malta. The university has secured more than €600,000 from the EU's Socrates programme for the project. The money will be used over the coming two years to design the course.
- **24 January 2007** Court action was taken in almost 900 cases of absenteeism in the first term of this scholastic year, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said. Replying to parliamentary questions the minister said four cases of absenteeism were reported in Church schools and court action was

taken in two of the cases. Court action was also taken in 137 cases of absenteeism in state primary schools and in 733 cases in state secondary schools.

- **24 January 2007** The Department of Further Studies and Adult Education of the Education Division has published *Sisien*, an adult literacy resource pack on the Maltese language. The pack consists of three books - *Nghallmu Lsienna*, *Inhaddmu Lsienna* and *Nitharrgu fi Lsienna* - a CD and A4 posters in colour. The pack was launched by the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, Louis Galea.
- **25 January 2007** It was contractual details that prolonged the negotiations related to the SmartCity@Malta project, Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said. In fact, nothing had changed from the principles concerning the amount of money that had to be invested or the number of jobs to be created. Speaking at a press conference, Dr Gatt said it had taken Tecom and the government such a long time to seal the deal "because both sides wanted to ensure everything was black on white. But the timeline of the project has not been delayed because other reports, such as the master plan and the impact assessments, were kick-started in parallel.
- **25 January 2007** The levels of carbon dioxide polluting the air have dropped by 69% in a matter of two years. Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister George Pullicino said that in 2004 there was a national reduction of 36%, with an additional drop of 33% in 2005, particularly in Floriana, Gudja, Lija, Qormi and Zebbug.
- **25 January 2007** US Ambassador Molly Bordonaro announced that the United States would be taking "many more" refugees from Malta. She was addressing a news conference held a few hours after a first group of 22 refugees had left Malta for the US.
- **25 January 2007** The Central Bank concluded a contract with the Monnaie de Paris for the minting of the euro coins with the Maltese national sides. The final document was signed after agreement was reached on all administrative details relating to the production and delivery of the coins.
- **25 January 2007** Government MPs underscored the benefits which a new law is offering organisations to be registered as legal persons. Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg explained that the administrators and members would no longer be personally liable for the obligations of such organisations.
- **25 January 2007** A total of 319 persons aged between two and 85 were reported missing last year, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said. Replying to a parliamentary question the minister said that 157 were men, 162 were women. Eighty-one were foreigners. In 99% of the cases the missing persons returned home or were found by the police. Most of them would have left home because of family trouble.
- **25 January 2007** The European Union must not fall victim to an activity trap, enslaved by an institutional calendar which is dedicated to its functioning at the expense of its vision, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo told ambassadors at a lunch held to exchange New Year greetings.
- **25 January 2007** Pullmantur Cruises will be returning to Malta after an absence of three years, Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech announced. He said that this will contribute towards Viset's target of between 420,000 and 425,000 passengers this year.
- **26 January 2007** The Prime Minister and the two main political parties have extended their good wishes to Mgr Paul Cremona on his consecration. Dr Gonzi and Nationalist Party general secretary Joe Saliba have written to

Archbishop-elect Mgr Paul Cremona, wishing him well. On their part, the National Executive of the Malta Labour Party said in a statement that the party joins the rest of the population in congratulating Mgr Cremona.

- **26 January 2007** The Electoral Commission said the next local elections will take place in 22 localities on March 10. The elections will be held at: Vittoriosa, Qormi, Siggiewi, Attard, Birzebbuga, Floriana, Gzira, Gharghur, Hamrun, Kercem, Luqa, Marsaxlokk, Mosta, Munxar, Paola, Qala, Safi, San Lawrenz, Sta Lucija, Swieqi, Xaghra and Zebbug (Gozo).
- **27 January 2007** Malta's new Archbishop, Mgr Paul Cremona, said he faced his "great mission" with fear but was confident that God would see him through. In a consecration Mass that lasted more than three hours at St John's Co-Cathedral, in Valletta, 61-year-old Mgr Cremona officially took possession of the title he was nominated for two months ago.
- **27 January 2007** Carnival 2007 will take place between February 16 and 20. On February 16 there will be dancing competitions and company floats in the carnival enclosure, in Valletta, from 6 p.m. onwards. Tickets for the enclosure cost Lm1.50.
- **27 January 2007** A 4% drop in the number of tourist arrivals was registered last year compared to the previous year, the National Statistics Office said. Total tourist expenditure decreased by 1.2% despite a 3% increase in per capita expenditure. Tourists last year spent a total of Lm422.4 million.
- **27 January 2007** Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea held a series of meetings with the Portuguese Secretary of State for Defence and Sea Affairs, Joao Mira Gomez. The talks dealt with various issues relating to maritime affairs, including the formulation of a National Maritime Policy, the Green Paper on the future of European Maritime Policy, Portuguese initiatives during the EU presidency, and the Mediterranean Motorways of the Seas
- **28 January 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona has confirmed Bishop Annetto Depasquale as Vicar-General and appointed Fr Anton Gouder as Pro-Vicar General to assist Mgr Depasquale. Mgr Depasquale was appointed Vicar-General to Archbishop Joseph Mercieca in January 1989 and was consecrated bishop in January 1999
- **28 January 2007** Farmers and producers of fruit and vegetables in the European Union will no longer be eligible to EU funds according to the quantity they produce, as the system is at present, but according to a new set of rules which include the size of land, the systems they use and the protection of the environment. EU Agriculture Commissioner, Mariann Fisher Boel unveiled the Commission's plan to implement a wide-ranging reform in this sector to get the fruit and vegetable sector in line with the reformed Common Agricultural Policy, already approved by the EU.
- **28 January 2007** A year of activities aimed to inform European citizens of their right to non-discrimination and equal treatment and to promote equal opportunities were unveiled in Brussels by Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Vladimir Spidla while launching the European year for equal opportunities being celebrated this year. The EU has dedicated a budget of €15 million towards this programme, which includes Malta.
- **28 January 2007** President Edward Fenech-Adami made an official visit to the Police Academy in Fort St Elmo. Police Commissioner John Rizzo and Commandant Ronald Kelly showed the President around the various facilities and explained that 135 recruits, including 35 women, are currently following a basic training course which started in October and ends next month, when they formally join the force as constables

- **29 January 2007** The European Commission is stepping up its preparations for the "illegal immigration season" after warning that the crossings are expected to start early this year. In a letter to all EU Interior Ministers, Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said: "The current mild weather improves the sailing conditions for the small vessels carrying illegal immigrants from Africa to the European Union enormously and may consequently lead to more arrivals at the southern external maritime borders much earlier than expected."
- **29 January 2007** Ryanair has urged the government to expand its financial initiatives to airlines for "many other routes," saying 71,000 had already booked to use the low-cost carrier's service to Malta. The Irish airline urged the government to play its part if it is serious about reviving tourism, arguing Malta needs low-cost access to boost hotel occupancy on a year-round basis.
- **29 January 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi spoke about SmartCity, during a political activity in Swieqi. Once the project had reached fruition, everyone would be wanting to find out why Malta had been chosen and the country would attract more investment to its shores. Since Malta had joined the EU, it was being seen by investors as a country of political and economic stability, with capable workers and a government that planned for the long term. Malta had become a country that was attractive to invest in.
- **29 January 2007** The number of blue stickers issued to people with mobility problems was cut by 20% between June and October 2006, following a clampdown by the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD). Of 251 applications between June and October 2006, only 110 were granted and a further 54 were given on a temporary basis. A further 54 were turned down and 33 applications were withdrawn. The stickers entitle the person to use parking spaces reserved for the disabled.
- **29 January 2007** Registered unemployment in December dropped by 218 persons when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The number of unemployed persons thus reached 7,161 persons, the NSO said, quoting the Employment and Training Corporation as the source of all data. The unemployment rates for December are not available because the data on the labour supply for this month is unavailable.
- **29 January 2007** Financial assistance to the agricultural sector last year amounted to more than Lm9 million, the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries, Francis Agius, said. Speaking during the inauguration of an exhibition on agriculture and organic trades, organised by the Agrarian Society, Dr Agius said both farmers and producers benefited from the assistance.
- **29 January 2007** Soldiers who work in detention centres are to be offered mental health support services by a local non-governmental organisation which helps employees who may be suffering occupational stress, the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said. He was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **30 January 2007** Crime reported to the police last year dropped by 1,988 cases, nearly 11%, compared to 2005, latest crime statistics show. General theft, which accounts for by far the biggest proportion of crime, was down by 1,233 reported cases, just under 11%. The crime of "damage" fell from 3,611 to 2,838 and homicides from three to nil.
- **30 January 2007** Accompanied by Health, the Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care Helen D'Amato and other hospital and health department officials, Archbishop Paul Cremona toured the various wards, from the High Dependency Unit to Disneyland, of St Luke's Hospital, stopping to chat with patients and offering them peace and prayers.

- **30 January 2007** Poet Karmenu Vassallo was honoured on Sunday morning when President Edward Fenech-Adami unveiled a bronze statue of the poet in Siggiewi, his birthplace. The statue is the result of collaboration between the local council and Ghaqda Kulturali of Siggiewi.
- **30 January 2007** MPs observed a minute's silence in Parliament to recall the Holocaust - January 27 being Holocaust Remembrance Day. The day marks the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp by the Soviet army on January 27, 1945.
- **30 January 2007** A total of 1,780 irregular migrants landed here last year and there are currently 1,020 migrants in detention centres, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to parliamentary questions. He said the AFM spent Lm2.2 million in connection with illegal migrants last year while the police spent Lm389,250, apart from salaries.
- **30 January 2007** Carnival in Gozo will be held over two weekends in Victoria starting on February 9 with a defilè and dance and costume competitions followed by the Nadur carnival on February 11 in the afternoon. Carnival this year sees for the first time the participation of a new category entitled Allegrija which includes a mixture of humour and live musical tunes.
- **30 January 2007** Industrial turnover increased by 9% last November over the same month in 2005, mainly driven by the consumer durables goods and the capital goods industrial groupings, the National Statistics Office said. Employment in industry is estimated to have increased by 10.8% last November on an annual basis. Gross wages and salaries in industry increased by 3.3% from November, the NSO said.
- **30 January 2007** The Malta Communications Authority decided there was no need for fixed telephone line providers to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency numbers in case of a power cut. Customers should, however, be fully aware of the limitations of such equipment in case of power cuts.
- **30 January 2007** The female general ward at the Gozo General Hospital is being completely refurbished as part of a larger project that includes the upgrading of the male general ward. Female patients have been temporarily transferred to a sectioned-off part of the male ward.
- **31 January 2007** A total of 1,014 persons were involved in accidents at work between last October and December, the National Statistics Office said, referring to figures published by the Department of Social Security. The number of accidents in the period under review increased by 85 (9.2%) over the same period in 2005.
- **31 January 2007** The labour supply last September dropped by 34 over the same month in 2005 according to labour market data provided by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) to the National Statistics Office. The gainfully occupied population dropped by eight persons and the registered unemployed dipped by 26.
- **31 January 2007** Talks between Malta and the United States on a ship-boarding agreement are approaching a successful conclusion, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo told Parliament. This agreement, the minister said, reflected the seriousness of the Maltese maritime flag and the importance which Malta gave the international rule of law. Dr Frendo was speaking at the end of a debate on a motion for Malta to ratify the Convention on Nuclear Safety of the International Atomic Agency (IAEA).
- **31 January 2007** Maltese anti-smoking laws were mentioned as an example as the EU executive published a Green Paper suggesting a smoking ban in public places in all 27 member states. Speaking to the press after publishing the

Green Paper, Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said the entire EU would benefit if a wide-ranging smoking ban were put in place.

- **31 January 2007** Malta has welcomed proposals by European Agriculture Commissioner Mariann Fisher Boel for farmers and producers of fruit and vegetables. Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries Francis Agius, who attended the Council of Ministers' meeting, said Malta agreed with the proposal for a reform in the fruit and vegetable market.
- **31 January 2007** The Gozo Citadel is expected to have its own master plan shortly, indicating recommendations and measures for a wider restoration and management project, Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono said. Funding is being sought from the European Economic Area (the European Union plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms, she said. Ms Debono was listing projects the government was embarking on in Gozo.

FEBRUARY

- **1 February 2007** Malta ended last year in a much better situation than it started when it comes to unemployment. New unemployment figures published in Brussels show that Malta's unemployment rate in December fell to 7%, as against 7.6% a year earlier. According to Eurostat, Malta's performance in lowering unemployment was demonstrated across the board.
- **1 February 2007** The government's efforts to ensure that Maltese tuna fishermen retain the right to catch tuna were boosted after a meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, where Malta was allocated a higher quota than anticipated.
- **1 February 2007** Total fish landings last year dropped by 3% - from 1,336,881 kilogrammes to 1,296,387 kilogrammes - when compared to 2005. The National Statistics Office said the decline was mainly the result of lower catches of swordfish (-26.0%) and blue fin tuna (-24.7%).
- **1 February 2007** Changing liri into euros next year will bring about some problems but the authorities are on the right track, Walter Fuchs, deputy director general of Austria's Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, believes. "They are well prepared and we were very impressed with their professionalism," he said during a press conference at the National Euro Changeover Committee's office, in Birkirkara.
- **1 February 2007** Outlay on social protection in 2005 took up more than 30% of total general government expenditure, followed by general public services (16.3%) and health (14.7%), the National Statistics Office said. Total general government expenditure for 2005 increased by almost Lm36 million compared to the previous year. Expenditure on health and on social protection added Lm15.6 million and Lm12.7 million respectively.
- **1 February 2007** A total of 1,597 Church marriages were registered at the Archdiocese of Malta last year, the Archbishop's Curia said. Of those who were married in Church, 1,411 were Maltese and one of the marriages was between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian.
- **2 February 2007** This January was the warmest on record, with temperatures reaching an average of 17.5°C during the day, 2.5°C above the average for the month. The Meteorological Office, which started keeping records in 1923, said these temperatures were more typical of the Easter period than this time of the year.

- **2 February 2007** The Italian government is offering 140 scholarships to Maltese citizens, and Malta is offering 68 to Italians to learn English. This is one aspect of a collaboration agreement on culture, signed by the permanent secretary in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Cecilia Attard Pirota, and the Italian Ambassador to Malta, Paolo Trabalza in the presence of the Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo and the Italian Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Famiano Crucianelli.
- **2 February 2007** Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona was greeted by male and female members of about 25 religious orders at a meeting in Birkirkara. At the end of a programme of singing and prayer, Mgr Cremona proposed to his listeners to be "Christ's highways to others to see the way to His love. What they see in us religious will make the difference." Mgr Cremona was reflecting on the motto he has chosen for his episcopate.
- **2 February 2007** The electoral commission said that nominations from 57 candidates for the forthcoming local elections in March were received. Elections will be held in 22 localities. These are Vittoriosa, Qormi, Siggiewi, Attard, Birzebbuga, Floriana, Gzira, Gharghur, Hamrun, Kercem, Luqa, Marsaxlokk, Mosta, Munxar, Paola, Qala, Safi, San Lawrenz, Sta Lucija, Swieqi, Xaghra, Zebbug, Gozo.
- **2 February 2007** Malta has a better than average transposition of EU laws, according to the latest scoreboard published by the European Commission. Until the end of last year, Malta had only 16 directives still pending, or just 1% of the total number of directives it was required to transpose. The average in the EU 25 (the list was compiled before Bulgaria and Romania joined) was 1.2%.
- **2 February 2007** Malta's Permanent Representative to the European Union, Richard Cachia Caruana, has been appointed by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi to represent him in crucial talks between the 27 member states aimed at settling the stalemate over the EU Constitution.
- **2 February 2007** Six asylum seekers left for Lithuania on Tuesday, the government said. Lithuania covered all the expenses becoming the third EU member state to support Malta in the area of asylum and irregular migration. The government said the operation follows the successful conclusion of talks held between officials from the home affairs ministries of the two countries.
- **2 February 2007** With an audience of 29.7%, TVM is the most popular television station, according to the Broadcasting Authority's audience survey for October to December. TVM was closely followed by One TV, which has 28% of television viewers. Net TV, with 13.3%, was next in line followed by Italia 1 (9.1%).
- **2 February 2007** Malta's High Commissioner in London, Michael Refalo, met Britain's Minister for Europe Geoff Hoon to explain and secure support for Malta's initiative to set up a formal EU-Arab League Dialogue. The meeting follows Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo's call last September, at an informal meeting of EU ministers in Finland, for an urgent strengthening of the structured political dialogue between the EU, the League of Arab States and their respective member states.
- **2 February 2007** The European Commission is receiving applications from individuals, companies and EU-wide consortia wishing to benefit from funding related to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) research projects. The €1.2 billion allocated this year under the seventh framework programme for research, known as the FP7, is the biggest allocation so far.
- **2 February 2007** A report published this week shows that the quality of life in Malta is among the best in the world. Placed 16th, the island ranks above

countries like Canada, Ireland and Sweden, according to International Living magazine's Quality of Life index 2007. France comes out on top while at the other end of the index, Iraq is the world's worst place to be for the second year in succession.

- **3 February 2007** Carnival will be getting an injection of spontaneity and satire from next year in an attempt to keep the spirit of this festive event alive. A law laid down in 1936 and still in place has suffocated the spirit of carnival satire that was evident in the past. The organisers say they feel the need to slowly review the situation. The programme, launched by Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech, includes more involvement by individual localities, carnival balls and a heavy input by the private sector.
- **3 February 2007** The government has issued a series of amendments to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations for public consultation. The regulations, introduced in 2001, include criteria through which particular development require an EIA in order to be assessed by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa). The amendments were published in the Government Gazette.
- **3 February 2007** Malta's initiative to take the dialogue between the European Union and the Arab League to a more visible, structured and engaged format was "very positively considered" by foreign ministers of the EU Mediterranean states meeting in Malta, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo said. Dr Frendo was speaking during a press conference on the third informal meeting of foreign ministers of EU Mediterranean member states.
- **3 February 2007** Uganda's ICT Minister, Ham-Mukasa Mulira visited the Malta Information Technology and Training Services Ltd (MITTS) in Blata l-Bajda whilst attending the Commonwealth Connects seminar. Commonwealth Connects is an initiative aimed at bridging the digital divide within the Commonwealth. It was set up following the Malta Declaration on Networking the Commonwealth for Development during the 2005 Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The next CHOGM will be held in Kampala, Uganda, later on this year.
- **4 February 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi spoke about the migration process from St Luke's Hospital to Mater Dei, about the positive effect the Smart City agreement was generating, and highlighted the country's economic successes among other issues during a news press conference at the Auberge de Castille, Dr Gonzi also said that last year's Budget experience, where the people were consulted, would be repeated this year. An audio recording of the press conference can be accessed on the following hyperlink:
<http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/archive/Pmpresstatements/audiorecording%20-%202003.02.07pmbrief.asp>
- **4 February 2007** Duncan Pescod, Special Representative for Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs to the European Communities, last week led a delegation to Malta for meetings with top government officials, the public service and the media. The delegation was also composed of deputy representative Mandy Wong, assistant representative Candy Nip and assistant information officer Mark Neiryneck. The office is based in Brussels.
- **4 February 2007** A total of 242 nominations were received by the Electoral Commission between Thursday and for the March 10 local elections in 22 localities electing 140 councillors. They include 121 Nationalist (PN:) candidates, 110 Labour (MLP:) candidates, seven from Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) and four independents.

- **4 February 2007** The Archbishop's Curia has announced the appointment of five new monsignors of the Metropolitan Chapter. They are Mgr Joseph Bugeja, Mgr Louis Camilleri, Mgr Tarcisio Delicata, Mgr Carmelo Farrugia and Mgr Salvino Micallef.
- **4 February 2007** Over 11,000 clients made use of the various services of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) last year, the chief executive officer Joe Gerada said. The figure did not include clients who access the services offered by the day centres for persons with a disability and those who called Supportline 179 for information or support. Addressing the annual Business Day of the Foundation on the theme 'Innovation - the key for growth', Mr Gerada said that the demand for social work in the communities was increasing; local councils were also making requests to address specific local issues.
- **4 February 2007** "We cannot stop migration - and the time will come when we ourselves will go to Africa for short or long periods of time." Dr Louis Galea, Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, said this in a keynote address to representatives of European workers' movements and adult education centres attending an AZAD seminar on vocational training, mobility and migration in Europe.
- **4 February 2007** Regional aspects of energy and climate change issues were discussed for the first time by the third informal meeting of EU Mediterranean foreign ministers in St Julian's last Friday. In his written conclusions, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo stated that "as littoral states facing North Africa and the Middle East - an oil-producing region with immense potential - we agreed that in its efforts to diversify its (energy) sources, the Union should give important consideration to the enhancement of its relations with its southern partners. The importance of addressing climate change and the need for more renewable energy sources to be developed was also the subject of our discussions."
- **5 February 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi urged the Maltese to be proud that Tecom had chosen Malta for its SmartCity project, which would be turning the island into a leading hub in ICT over the next 15 years during a social activity in Gzira.
- **5 February 2007** The European Year Of Equal Opportunities For All, 2007 was launched during a European conference on discrimination and equal opportunities in Berlin, attended by Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina. In Malta, the European Year Of Equal Opportunities For All is being co-ordinated by the Family and Social Solidarity Ministry.
- **5 February 2007** Twenty Armed Forces of Malta soldiers have successfully completed their training leading to combat medics certification. They were presented with certificates and qualification badges during a ceremony held at Luqa Barracks, presided over by AFM Commander Brigadier Carmel Vassallo.
- **5 February 2007** The current phase of expansion at Oiltanking Malta will take the facility to its full potential storage capacity, Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea was told during a visit last week. The present investment includes an outlay of Lm8 million on three new tanks that will provide an additional 90,000 cubic metres of capacity.
- **6 February 2007** The surcharge on utility bills has been slashed by another nine percentage points to 45%, the lowest level in a year-and-a-half. The revised surcharge has been spread over three months, March to May, rather than the usual two, "thanks to Enemalta's diligent strategy of fuel purchasing", according to the Industry, Investment and Information Technology Ministry.

The revision marks a reduction of 22.5 percentage points from that in the same period last year.

- **6 February 2007** Malta has persistently maintained its biosecurity measures to cut the risk of a bird flu outbreak and ensure early detection, government vet Mireille Vella said. As Britain fights an outbreak that has led to the culling of 160,000 turkeys, the local veterinary department has not, for a moment, lowered its guard, according to Dr Vella. It was also constantly reminding farmers about the importance of ensuring that poultry food and drink is not contaminated by wild birds. "The important thing is to prevent as far as possible the risk of infection."
- **6 February 2007** Last year's economic growth of over 2.7% was being sustained this year and government revenue in January was higher than projected, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech told Parliament. He said tax revenue rose from Lm222 million in 2005 to Lm256.6 million last year even though no new tax measures were introduced. That was Lm13.5 million more than projected the previous year and more than Lm6 million from what was projected when the budget speech was presented last October.
- **6 February 2007** Malta has double taxation relief agreements with 44 countries while agreements with Switzerland and the US are limited to profits from the operation of international air and maritime traffic. There are also agreements with five countries that have been signed but are awaiting ratification, as well as four others that have been technically concluded but not yet signed, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 February 2007** There are 53 foreign doctors working in Maltese hospitals, Health, the Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question. Forty-seven of them are working at St Luke's Hospital, one is working at Boffa Hospital and five are working at Gozo General Hospital.
- **6 February 2007** During 2006 there were 69 persons who died tragically, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question. Eleven men died after traffic accidents, 20 men and four women committed suicide, four men and two women died of overdoses, and 20 men and eight women died tragically of other causes.
- **6 February 2007** The number of marital separation cases that went to mediation last year was 998, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question. In Malta, 329 of those cases presented a draft contract that was approved, and 120 went on to procedures in the First Hall. In Gozo, 47 cases went to mediation, 13 of which presented a draft contract that was approved, while nine cases went to the First Hall. Dr Borg said this showed that the number of separation cases was dropping every year, and that the mediation process was working well.
- **6 February 2007** The police have taken court action against 1,020 persons since the ban on smoking in public places was introduced in 2004, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 February 2007** The Central Bank, in conjunction with the European Central Bank, will be giving training to professional cash handlers to explain euro banknote security features. Information about these features is already available from the bank, bank branches and the National Euro Changeover Committee (Necc).
- **6 February 2007** Conservation work has started on the ruins of a 15th century church dedicated to St Nicholas in Siggiewi. The intention is to turn the site into an archaeological attraction and open it to the public. Information panels

will explain the history of the church and the sculptures will form part of a permanent display. The work is being carried out by the Restoration Section of the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure.

- **6 February 2007** Each mobile phone owner sent an average of 1,300 SMSs last year, more than three a day. Figures released by the National Statistics Office show that an astonishing 446.9 million SMSs were sent by users during the whole of last year. The average is drawn on the basis that the number of mobile phone users was over 325,000, as given by the NSO last year. According to the NSO, the number of minutes consumed on mobile telephones last year was 204.6 million, while minutes consumed on fixed telephony amounted to 628.8 million. National postal traffic reached 50.7 million items.
- **7 February 2007** The Department of Housing Construction and Maintenance within the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity will be financing a Lm107,000 project to replace pavements in 11 streets and a square in Iklin. A total of 370 families will benefit from the six-year project that starts this year, the ministry said. The Iklin local council will be carrying out the works. The Minister, Dolores Cristina, presented the letter of commitment to mayor Anthony Dalli.
- **7 February 2007** Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt described 2007 as a "bumper year" of small and medium projects in the film industry in accordance with the government's established targets. Dr Gatt was speaking at the launch of the Malta Film Commission's new official website, an important tool to attract investment in Malta's movie industry.
- **7 February 2007** There are 382 inmates at the Corradino Correctional Facility, 275 of whom have been sentenced, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question. He said 22 are under 25 years old.
- **7 February 2007** Fifteen Gozitans were arraigned in the last five years to face drug trafficking charges, Justice Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, Tonio Borg said in Parliament. The youngest was 20 years old, whereas the oldest one was 55. Dr Borg gave the information in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **7 February 2007** An Organisation For The Integration And Welfare Of Asylum Seekers will soon be set up to facilitate the lives of the 1,600 immigrants accommodated in open centres. For the past months, the Ministry for Social Solidarity has worked to create a network between its seven open centres in order to ensure a greater uniformity and more accountable policies. News of the organisation emerged during a national meeting on The Integration Of Third Country Nationals, hosted by SOS Malta as part of its EUNET Integration Network project, co-financed by the European Commission through the INTI programme fund.
- **7 February 2007** An exhibition of eight designs for the landscaping of Magtab was opened at St James Cavalier, in Valletta, marking an important milestone in the country's environmental history through the proposed transformation of a rubbish dump into a recreational area. From the creation of a "monstrous mountain of waste", Malta had moved on to proposals as to how the site could be embellished for the benefit of the community, Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister George Pullicino said.
- **8 February 2007** Public Health Department inspectors are working on a document explaining health regulations for food outlets. Once completed, the document will be posted on the department's website so that it could be accessed by food establishment owners, John Attard Kingswell, manager health inspector at the Department of Public Health, said

- **8 February 2007** Go Mobile and Vodafone, the two local mobile networks, have signed an agreement in Brussels on the protection of minors who use mobile phones. The initiative, undertaken by the European Commission, covers areas such as adult and illegal content. The agreement obliges mobile phone companies, which include big players such as Deutsche Telekom Group, Orange and Telecom Italia, to develop self-regulatory codes by February 2008.
- **8 February 2007** The Water Services Corporation is finalising preparations for the upgrading of reverse osmosis plants by using a new type of membrane and more energy efficient equipment while improving the quality of water produced. Chairman Michael Falzon says in the WSC's annual report, tabled in Parliament, that the Lm1.9 million project will be co-funded by the EU, which will meet 73% of the cost.
- **8 February 2007** There are 6,682 foreigners who hold permits to work in Malta, 2,759 of whom are from EU countries, Education and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in Parliament. He said the largest number of foreign workers are from the UK (431) followed by Serbia/Montenegro (353), China (236) and Bulgaria 169.
- **8 February 2007** There are 11,929 licensed hunters and 4,616 licensed trappers, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said. He was replying to a parliamentary question. The Minister said in reply to another question that 419 persons were arraigned last year for allegedly violating hunting regulations
- **8 February 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said that 1,933 persons were arraigned in court last year for failing to submit VAT declarations and payments on time; 145 for failing to observe previous court sentences; 36 for having repeatedly submitted VAT returns without due payment and 72 for illegally importing items which were subject to VAT. He was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 February 2007** There are 240 Maltese working with EU institutions. Answering a parliamentary question Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo said 92 were working with the European Commission, 58 with the European Parliament, 43 with the Council of Europe, one with the European Investment Bank, five with the European Central Bank, six with the European Court of Auditors, 32 with the European Court of Justice and three with the Regional Committee and the Economic and Social Committee.
- **8 February 2007** The National Commission Persons with a Disability (KNPD) and the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) are working to ensure Maltese websites will be accessible to everyone, including disabled persons. Today, all public websites are certified for accessibility by FITA, before being brought online on the gov.mt domain. Information about the websites and the work being carried out, can be obtained from the FITA website at <http://www.knpd.org/mittsfita>
- **8 February 2007** Malta was in for praise by the European Commission for continuing to come in line with the EU's financial and economic rules and for cutting its structural deficit and its gross debt levels. Speaking after the publication in Brussels of the European Commission's assessment of Malta's updated convergence programme for the years 2006-2009, submitted by the government last December following the announcement of its 2007 budget, European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joachim Almunia commended Malta for the results obtained.
- **8 February 2007** Over 1,900 calls were received on the euro line 154 last month, a spokesman for the National Euro Changeover Committee said. Although the number of calls have more than doubled since the FAIR initiative

- a commitment to display correct prices in both lira and euro - was launched in early December, the number of calls rose again by about 300 last month.

- **8 February 2007** The fresh fruit and vegetable supply for the fourth quarter of last year went up by 17.3% over the comparative period the previous year, the National Statistics Office said. The wholesale value increased by 20.4%. Last December, the fruit price index stood at 96.68 points or 8.01 points higher than the index in December 2005.
- **9 February 2007** Ryanair's first flight from Dublin landed at Malta International Airport, with hoteliers confident its popularity would attract more tourists to the island. The low-cost carrier, which already operates flights between Malta and London's Luton airport and Pisa in Italy, offers the Dublin-Malta service three times a week, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Flight FR 7242 arrives at Malta International Airport at 11.55 a.m. with the return flight FR7243 to Dublin at 12.25 p.m.
- **9 February 2007** Child abuse over the internet can now be reported online thanks to an inter-ministerial initiative that allows anyone to inform Agenzija Appogg of illicit content on suspicious and harmful websites, or send queries. The online reporting system was officially launched on the occasion of European Internet Safety Day. However, the pilot project has been operational since October and 30 reports have already been lodged, ranging from suspicious language to enquiries about websites, the CEO of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Joe Gerada, said.
- **9 February 2007** Three hundred carpenters, beauticians, farmers, engineers, clothes retailers, boat builders, ceramic makers, owners of small hotels and tour operators participated in programmes funded by the European Union last year, according to Edwin Vassallo, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and the Self-Employed. Addressing an information meeting, Mr Vassallo said the small businesses obtained €10 million under a number of programmes including Leonardo da Vinci, Interreg and the sixth framework programme (FP6).
- **9 February 2007** Small states can contribute a great deal to achieve results on difficult issues because they pose no threat and have no hidden agendas, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo said. Dr Frendo was speaking at the opening of the Diplomacy For Small States Conference being held by the Diplo Foundation in Malta.
- **9 February 2007** Helping Hands Foundation (HHF) presented a cheque for Lm10,000 to Caritas. The money was raised from the foundation's second campaign in favour of Caritas. The campaign is based on the sale of a publication that focuses on the organisation that is to be helped.
- **10 February 2007** The government is thinking of opening childcare centres in public schools, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. Schools are already well-equipped to deal with children - they are child-friendly, have open spaces and enjoy the trust of parents, she said. "It is only natural to open childcare centres within schools," she said. Speaking during a conference organised by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, she said opening such childcare centres carries the advantage of not needing new buildings.
- **10 February 2007** Europe should help governments of developing countries build efficient social security systems, otherwise extremist and terrorist organisations would step in to satisfy the people's needs, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo said. He was delivering the opening speech at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Conference on the theme Supporting the Reform

Process in the Mediterranean, which was held at the Le Meridien Phoenicia in Floriana.

- **10 February 2007** The visible trade gap widened by Lm6.3 million last year over the previous year, to stand at Lm500.2 million, the National Statistics Office said. The increase in imports of Lm119.2 million exceeded the Lm112.9 million rise in exports, the NSO pointed out.
- **10 February 2007** Network Publications Ltd presented a copy of the first issue of its magazine Let's Gozo to Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo. The magazine is the latest initiative to promote tourism to Gozo. It will be published monthly, with the first issue out this month, in collaboration with the Gozo Tourism Association, the Ministry for Gozo and the Gozo Channel Co. Ltd. The magazine will be distributed free.
- **10 February 2007** Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo has welcomed the Mecca agreement on the formation of a Palestinian national unity government, saying it should result in an immediate end to the internal violence and tensions of the past few weeks. Dr Frendo said he looked forward to discussing this important issue and the EU's reaction with colleagues at the meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU on Monday.
- **10 February 2007** Forty lawyers and two legal procurators were given their oath of office in the presence of Chief Justice Vincent De Gaetano. Mr Justice J. D. Camilleri and Mr Justice Joseph Filletti. The Chief Justice of the state of Ontario, Heather Foster Smith, who paid a courtesy visit on the Chief Justice, was also present.
- **10 February 2007** The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage launched a Cultural Heritage Inventory Management System that will record the country's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The national inventory will store and manage data pertaining to all sectors of cultural heritage.
- **11 February 2007** The embellished and modernised Spinola Palace Garden in St Julian's - a Lm300,000 project - was inaugurated by President Edward Fenech-Adami, marking another stage in the facelift of what has become an upmarket area over the years. The concept behind the garden is baroque in plan, with a contemporary twist in its realisation, architect Victoria Valletta from Ray Demicoli and Associates said. The baroque style was the point of departure for the design, given that Spinola Palace is the backdrop, she said.
- **11 February 2007** Between 1998 and 2010, Government, through its department of house construction and repair, would have spent Lm10.5 million to meet its aims for housing estates and create a better environment for families to live in, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. Ms Cristina was speaking at the inauguration of another garden in Mellieha - the fruit of a collaboration between the government and the local council.
- **12 February 2007** Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona concelebrated Mass at the Mosta parish church on the occasion of the World Day of the Sick, as well as the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes. The main celebration to mark the day was held in Seoul, South Korea.
- **13 February 2007** The government announced that it will be issuing a fresh call for tenders for the provision of an IT system for Mater Dei Hospital. The announcement was made in a statement which was accompanied by a copy of a letter sent by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi to the Director of Contracts.
- **13 February 2007** Malta's Grand Harbour has become one of the most important ports in Europe for the cruise industry, becoming the seventh most

visited in Europe in 2005. According to a study published in Brussels by the European Cruise Council, which represents the leading cruise companies operating in Europe, Malta has managed to build modern cruise line facilities that are attracting a large segment of Europe's cruise passengers. It hosted more than 320,000 passengers in 2005.

- **13 February 2007** A visit by a Parliamentary delegation to the Gulf states has "opened a window of opportunity" for Malta in many respects, Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Jason Azzopardi told the press. Flanked by fellow MPs who last week visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, Dr Azzopardi said the committee would shortly convene a meeting for The Federation of Industry, the Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to inform them about the opportunities there. This was a first visit by a Maltese Parliamentary delegation to the region.
- **13 February 2007** Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono said this year's allocation included Lm3.3 million for sewage purification and Lm3 million for a new boys' secondary school but several other projects were now approaching fruition or being taken in hand. The Minister was speaking in Parliament during the Budget Measures Implementation Bill.
- **13 February 2007** The government transferred Lm12.7 million to Church schools last year, Lm11.5 million in 2005 and Lm10.2 million in 2004, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **13 February 2007** Malta has not been affected by the recall of Easter eggs made by Cadbury, John Attard Kingswell, manager health inspector at the Department of Public Health, said. Last week Cadbury recalled a number of products, including the Crunchie and Dairy Milk Easter eggs, because they contained the wrong nut allergy labelling.
- **14 February 2007** Music and dance performances by the Shaanxi Folk Art Theatre troupe from northern China were held in St George's Square, Republic Street, and the Upper Barrakka Gardens to celebrate the Chinese New Year - the Year of the Pig. The performances formed part of the Chinese Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, which was celebrated in the capital city where the traditions of northern China met Mediterranean civilisation and culture.
- **14 February 2007** The outgoing Commissioner for Children has stressed the need to "really wake up to treating children as a priority". In her annual report for 2006, tabled in Parliament, Sonia Camilleri recalled that last year's report carried the phrase "Children cannot wait". Quite a few people in strategic positions appreciated the truth of this maxim but others, unfortunately, "are so entrenched in their relaxed adult pace of doing things" that children were left to wait for services, proper learning environments, healthcare, necessary legislation and justice.
- **14 February 2007** The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Anton Tabone, discussed bilateral relations with Canadian counterpart Noel Kinsella, at the Palace in Valletta.
- **14 February 2007** Malta is to extend dual citizenship rights to second generation Maltese born outside Malta, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told Parliament. He said in a statement to the House that the government would be moving important amendments to the Citizenship Act dealing mostly with persons born abroad to Maltese parents also born abroad. To date, he explained, Maltese citizenship had been limited to Maltese born abroad when at least one of their parents was born in Malta.
- **14 February 2007** The Occupational and Safety Authority has issued Good Practice Criteria to media organisations to ensure that the lives of journalists,

photographers and cameramen are safeguarded. In a press release, the authority said the ultimate philosophy should be the recognition that no single story, no matter how dramatic, is worth a life.

- **14 February 2007** The president of the Sicilian province of Siracusa, Bruno Marziano, was recently on an official visit to Malta to meet officials in a bid to strengthen commercial and cultural links with the island. Dr Marziano met President Edward Fenech-Adami and held discussions with the Minister for Tourism and Culture, Francis Zammit Dimech, and the Italian Ambassador, Paolo Trabalza. He was accompanied by Ray Bondin, executive co-ordinator of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project.
- **15 February 2007** Pope Benedict XVI has approved the decree of The Congregation for Sainthood Causes on the miracle that should lead to the canonisation of Blessed Gorg Preca. This was announced by Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona during a meeting with two sections of the Christian Doctrine Society, known as the MUSEUM, at their headquarters in Blata l-Bajda.
- **15 February 2007** Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg has suggested the erection of a monument for the 43 Maltese who were exiled to Uganda during the Second World War. Speaking in Parliament late on Tuesday, on the 65th anniversary of a momentous sitting of the Council of Government which debated an Order providing for the exile of the group, Dr Borg said that was one of the worst moments of Maltese parliamentary history, but it was also the scene of one of the finest speeches ever heard in the Chamber.
- **15 February 2007** Malta ranks 161st among 195 countries and territories in the under-five mortality rate. The 195th placing tops the ranking with the lowest mortality rate. Malta, with an under-five mortality rate of six per 1,000 births, is in the same league as Australia, Canada, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand and the UK. These findings result from a Unicef study called The State Of The World's Children 2007.
- **15 February 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Malta Hotels & Restaurants Association President Josef Formosa Gauci agreed on the importance of having all stakeholders working closely together to ensure success. They were speaking at the MHRA's business lunch at the Radisson SAS Bay Point Resort in St Julians.
- **15 February 2007** Ten refugees left for Ireland following an agreement between the Republic of Ireland and Malta in response to a call to EU member states to show solidarity in immigration and asylum. Ireland joins three other EU countries that have applied the principle of burden sharing and accepted to transfer responsibility for refugees from Malta. This is mainly the result of a coordinated campaign within the EU and international fora by the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **15 February 2007** Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said Malta's "contact centre" activity had succeeded in creating a presence on the global market. The success registered so far suggested there were prospects for other operators to have a presence here, the Minister said during a visit to Availacall contact centre in Birkirkara, on Tuesday.
- **15 February 2007** The new director of the United Nations Institute for the Elderly, based in Malta, is Joseph Troisi. Prof. Troisi's nomination, which was made by the government, has been accepted by the United Nations' secretary general. Prof. Troisi was director of the Third Age University and has a vast experience in this sector.
- **15 February 2007** The EU Committee of the Regions highlighted the problems Malta faces in dealing with illegal immigrants trying to reach European soil. In

an opinion approved during its plenary session meeting in Brussels, rapporteur Laura de Esteban Martin called for a holistic policy to combat illegal migration and for the creation of a new financial instrument by the EU to ensure the integration of recent immigrants and their descendants. Malta's problems were underlined during a press conference.

- **16 February 2007** The number of Maltese going abroad last year amounted to 257,167, a 14.3% increase over the 224,929 recorded in the previous year. The most frequent destination was Italy, accounting for 30.6% of the total number of passengers. In December alone, the number of outbound passengers reached 23,813, up by 24.3% from December of the previous year.
- **16 February 2007** Although there has been a much better response by member states than last year to the Commission's call for equipment to be used in patrols against illegal immigration this summer, the Commission is still not satisfied and has called for more efforts. Addressing a press conference in Brussels following a meeting of EU Justice Ministers, Commissioner Franco Frattini called on all EU member states to make an extra effort and provide more equipment than they have done so far to the EU's border control agency, Frontex.
- **16 February 2007** As from next year, selected government entities will be allocating 0.25% of their budget to research and innovation, while the government will be investing 0.75% of the GDP by 2010. This was announced during the launch of the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration (FP7).
- **16 February 2007** Another 26 payments to fishermen to upgrade vessels has brought the amount granted so far to Lm1,804,000, according to Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, Francis Agius. During the presentation of the funds, Dr Agius said the assistance programme was still going on and as soon as it was possible, payment of pending contracts would continue. In fact, another 14 payments amounting to over Lm50,000 were to be processed immediately.
- **16 February 2007** The Rocky Horror Show, a Masquerade production, was launched by Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech, who expressed his pleasure that such spectacles were growing increasingly sophisticated. The show would be different in that it was introducing the innovative concept of audience participation, he said.
- **16 February 2007** The Central Bank's latest Business Perceptions Survey, conducted between October and November, revealed a fourth consecutive quarterly improvement in expectations about the general economic situation over the next six months. This was driven by better sentiment among both local and export-oriented firms, the CBM said in the Quarterly Review for the third quarter of 2006.
- **16 February 2007** Enemalta has announced the resignation of its CEO, Anthony Rizzo. The corporation said Ing. Rizzo will be vacating his post in mid-April for reasons of career progression. The board has accepted the resignation, Enemalta said.
- **16 February 2007** The Federation of Industry has just published its annual review summarising the federation's main activities and providing an assessment of the economy. The review includes a section on the new industrial policy and a brief overview of the main developments under the Mediterranean Trading and Innovation Centre (METIC) project.
- **16 February 2007** EU energy ministers meeting in Brussels failed to agree to a Commission plan to set binding targets for renewable energy and the use of biofuels in transport by 2020. Malta, along with the majority of member states,

opposed the setting of mandatory targets arguing that they should remain voluntary.

- **16 February 2007** The public and interested stakeholders are invited to provide their feedback on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report and draft Operational Programme of the European Union Interregional Cooperation Programme, Interreg IVC. The SEA Report of the Interreg IVC Operational Programme can be downloaded from www.ppcd.gov.mt. Comments may be sent to the SEA Audit Team on e-mail address sea_audit_team@gov.mt or by post to Christopher Ciantar, SEA Audit Team, c/o Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Barriera Wharf, Valletta, by March 16.
- **17 February 2007** Libya is prepared to discuss oil exploration with Malta in zones adjacent to the two countries' maritime frontiers, Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo said. Experts from both countries will be meeting here in April to try and identify opportunities for cooperation, reopening a delicate project Libya last ruled out in January 2004. Speaking during a news conference at the end of a "successful" joint-committee meeting between Libya and Malta, Dr Frendo said the two sides were determined to find agreement over sea areas of dispute.
- **17 February 2007** A Eurostat report shows Malta has the safest roads in the EU. Malta recorded the lowest ratio with 61 deaths per one million registered passenger cars, nearly half the number of fatalities of the second safest country - Sweden. The report by the European Commission's statistical office, compared 2004 figures from the member states and found that since 1994 there has been considerable progress in road safety in all countries for which data is available.
- **17 February 2007** Malta has joined a number of other countries in a symbolic activity marking the second anniversary of the Kyoto Treaty. The treaty was marked when the lights on the bastions of Fort St Angelo and Mdina were switched off between 8 and 9 p.m. to show recognition of the need to save energy. The activity was an initiative of the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment.
- **17 February 2007** A code of ethics that will further regulate the social work profession should be published later this year, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. The Minister was addressing the first national social work conference organised by the Maltese Association of Social Workers, in collaboration with the Department of Social Policy and Social Work and the university. It was held over two days at the Westin Dragonara Resort, in St Julians.
- **17 February 2007** Enquiries regarding petitions over fines which members of the public feel were unjustly given out can now be made on freephone 8007 2373. Written petitions can be sent to The Petitions Board, PO Box 41, Valletta
- **17 February 2007** Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech opened the dental clinic Fortedent at the new Fortina Spa Resort. Health tourism, which also includes dental practice, is becoming a big niche market worldwide, he said, adding that Malta wants to develop a wellness tourism segment.
- **17 February 2007** Subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased in December, the National Statistics Office said. About 15.5 million minutes were consumed on mobile telephone networks (15.1 million in the previous month), while those directed from mobile to fixed-line amounted to 1.9 million (two million in the previous month). The mobile communication traffic included about 42.6 million SMSs.

- **18 February 2007** Cardinal Renato Raffaelo Martino said Europe needed to respond to immigration situation not only with short-term policy but also to deal with the root of the problem. "Why these people are fleeing their country is the question we need to be asking ourselves. We need to help Africa, not through charity, but by helping the Africans become protagonists in their future." The Cardinal, who was on a three-day visit to the island, delivered a few lectures but also found time to tour the Marsa open centre on Friday. The Cardinal also met President Edward Fenech-Adami and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **18 February 2007** Hundreds filled the streets of Valletta for the second day of Carnival. In Gozo, a parade in Republic Street, Victoria, was followed by a dance spectacle with the participation of school groups. Carnival was also celebrated in Xewkija, Qala and San Lawrenz, although it was the usual merriment at Nadur which attracted the crowds.
- **18 February 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi expressed optimism that solutions to the Mater Dei IT tender issue would be found so that plans for the opening of the new hospital would not fall behind. The Prime Minister was speaking during a political activity in Sta Lucija.
- **18 February 2007** The Malta Sports Council has presented over Lm80,000 to 32 sport organisations. The funds were collected last year through the Good Causes Fund, pushing the total support from funds raised last year to over Lm400,000. The presentations were made by Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea and the Parliamentary Secretary within the Finance Ministry, Tonio Fenech.
- **18 February 2007** Research carried out by Victim Support Malta (VSM) into crime involving international travellers has confirmed the safety tourists enjoy during their stay on the islands. The objective of the study, part of an AGIS project held in conjunction with Victim Support UK and INAVEM (France's Victim Support), was to establish the qualitative aspect of support given to international travellers who become victims of crime, and how support services may be improved if necessary.
- **18 February 2007** The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka has successfully established three Multipurpose Community Tele-centres (MCTs) in tsunami-affected coastal areas of southern Sri Lanka, with funds donated by the government of Malta, through the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO). Anthony De Bono, who as CTO chairman had been responsible for the execution of the project, and Henry Alamango, executive director of Comnet IT, were the guests of the Sri Lankan government to inaugurate the three centres. Mr Alamango was representing Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo.
- **19 February 2007** The government is to replace the current subsidies given to wine makers for imported grapes with equivalent subsidies for exports of locally produced DOC and IGT wines, Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister George Pullicino said. Speaking to members of the recently set up Maltese Viticulture Association, Mr Pullicino said the move was intended to encourage more production of local quality wines.
- **19 February 2007** Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech opened a joint exhibition of paintings and silvercraft entitled Faces, Earrings And More by Joe Spiteri Staines and Kevin Attard at the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, Palazzo De La Salle, in Valletta. Fifteen pastel portraits by Mr Spiteri Staines of women wearing Mr Attard's filigree earrings are being exhibited together with another 15 seascapes and landscapes. Mr Attard is also exhibiting a number of silver creations.

- **20 February 2007** There were 647 work permits issued to third-country nationals between August 1 and December 31, 2005, and 4,064 throughout 2006, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in reply to a parliamentary question. Malta Shipyards accounted for 838 of these work permits while Mater Dei Hospital accounted for 426. Of the others, 1,548 were renewed and 1,251 were fresh applications.
- **20 February 2007** Forty-eight babies were born to illegal immigrants held in detention centres between 2002 and last year, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question. He said 10 were born last year, 13 in 2002; 12 in 2003; 10 in 2004 and three in 2005.
- **20 February 2007** Just under 91% of tourists visited Valletta last year, 69.9% toured Mdina but just 28.1% went to Cottonera, according to figures given in Parliament by Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech. Replying to a parliamentary question the Minister said 1.12 million tourists visited Malta last year, of whom 1,019,607 visited Valletta, 785,542 went to Mdina and 315,561 went to Cottonera.
- **20 February 2007** The Tunisian Parliament has ratified the friendship and cooperation agreement it had signed with Malta in June 2005. The agreement, signed by Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo and his Tunisian counterpart Abdelbaki Hermassi, binds the two countries to find just and fair solutions to any issues which may crop up between them. Malta and Tunisia agreed to hold regular meetings once a year between the two prime ministers and twice a year between the two foreign ministers. The agreement also seeks to benefit businessmen from both countries through joint ventures.
- **20 February 2007** The National Euro Changeover Committee has released the third update of the Master Plan For The Euro Changeover, which was originally launched last year. The master plan describes the milestones and activities leading to, during and after euro adoption.
- **20 February 2007** A sharp drop in cruise liner passengers was reported last month with Viset, the operators of the Valletta Waterfront, putting it down to a cancelled cruise ship. In January, cruise passenger traffic accounted for 1,398 persons, a drop of 4,153 passengers over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said. Only one cruise liner called in Malta in January, compared to four in the same month last year. However, two vessels were booked for January, but one was cancelled, a spokesman for Viset said. On January 3, a Costa Europa cruise liner could not make it to Grand Harbour due to bad weather and proceeded to the next port.
- **20 February 2007** Pembroke local council has signed a twinning agreement with the Comune di Roccalumera in Sicily. After the signing a reception was hosted by the Comune in honour of the delegation from the Pembroke council. Present for the signing ceremony were mayors Joe Zammit and Gianni Miasi, councillors from both towns and mayors from nearby towns, among others.
- **20 February 2007** There were 647 work permits issued to third-country nationals between August 1 and December 31, 2005, and 4,064 throughout 2006, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said in reply to a parliamentary question. Malta Shipyards accounted for 838 of these work permits while Mater Dei Hospital accounted for 426. Of the others, 1,548 were renewed and 1,251 were fresh applications.
- **21 February 2007** Fewer than a dozen first warning letters have been issued by the National Euro Changeover Committee to businesses breaching the dual display regulations. Furthermore, no business has so far been served with a second warning letter, raising hopes that the introduction of the euro might

not, after all, trigger rampant retail abuse. Speaking at the launch of the third revised euro master plan, NECC chairman Joseph F.X. Zahra said reports of incorrect pricing are investigated immediately and action is taken within days.

- **21 February 2007** Three childcare facilities should be opening in state schools by the start of the next scholastic year, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea, said. A new childcare centre was soon to open in Birkirkara in a partnership between the local council and the government. Other local councils were seeking to do the same, said Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina. The Ministers were speaking at the Westin Dragonara Kids Club during the Employment and Training Corporation's launch of a national campaign to promote the benefits of quality childcare services for children, their parents, employers and society in general.
- **21 February 2007** Carnival came to a conclusion after five days which saw thousands of spectators swarming to Valletta and other parts of the islands.
- **21 February 2007** Central Bank Governor Michael Bonello has warned against the premature exchange of the Maltese lira into the euro, as de-hoarding starts to take place. Many are choosing to exchange lira notes for euro notes on the black market, while others are paying unnecessary bank commissions to do so, the Governor said. Mr Bonello's warning came at the end of a plenary session organised by the National Euro Changeover Committee, which presented its third revised master plan 10 months before the anticipated introduction of the euro.
- **21 February 2007** The police force has 135 fresh recruits, allowing it to be in a better position to fight crime and put people's minds at rest, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said when he met the recruits at his ministry. This was the largest recruitment - making up 8% of the force - at one go, he said.
- **21 February 2007** The number of nights spent in hotels and other "collective accommodation establishments" rose by 6.8% last December over the same month in 2005 to reach 375,939, the National Statistics Office said. This despite the fact that the average length of stay went down by 0.9 nights to stand at 5.2 nights.
- **21 February 2007** It is scandalous that coercive marriages of women and children continue to be tolerated under the umbrella of respect for culture and tradition, according to Gulsün Bilgehan, chairman of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men within the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. During her presentation, Ms Bilgehan highlighted the committee's work to eradicate violations of women's human rights, sometimes committed in the name of "their interpretation of religion".
- **22 February 2007** Filippo Lubiato, from Switzerland, has won the Class A Golden Knight award for his entry Sublime at the 45th Golden Knight Malta International Film Festival (2006). The festival was organised by the Malta Cine Circle at the Le Meridien Hotel, in St Julians.
- **22 February 2007** More than 81% of Maltese workers interviewed in an EU-wide survey on various aspects of working conditions said they are satisfied with their job and working conditions but not with their pay. Only 44% said they are well paid for their work. The fourth European Working Conditions survey was published in Brussels by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, an EU agency based in Dublin. In Malta, 600 workers were interviewed by Misco on behalf of the EU agency.
- **22 February 2007** Maltese men are the most obese in the EU, according to new data published by the EU's statistical arm, Eurostat. Maltese women are

also considered to be leading a very unhealthy lifestyle and rank third for obesity.

- **22 February 2007** Malta agreed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% of its 1990 levels in 13 years' time. The EU, however, accepted Malta's argument that the targets should not be binding for member states individually but should be calculated as a general EU-27 target. The decision was taken following a meeting of EU environment ministers in Brussels, on Tuesday.
- **22 February 2007** The Maltese Sports Council has embarked on the building of a sports complex at Kirkop, next to the new secondary school. The complex will be open to residents, sports organisations and students from neighbouring villages, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said. The council has entrusted the project to the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools.
- **23 February 2007** Malta will feature in a Korean TV commercial for a wheat-based beverage, scenes having been filmed in Mdina and Valletta earlier this week. Myung-Chun Park, considered to be among the most established Korean commercial directors, was in charge of the project. He had already filmed a Coca-Cola commercial at the Rinella water tanks a few years back.
- **23 February 2007** More than 3,500 traffic accidents, including three fatalities, were reported between last September and December, the National Statistics Office said. This represented an increase of 192 accidents over the same quarter the previous year.
- **23 February 2007** The number of registered unemployed dropped by 391 last January when compared to the same month last year, according to the National Statistics Office. The number of unemployed last month stood at 7,308 persons, with the categories of men in the 30 to 44 and the 45 plus brackets accounting for nearly two thirds of the registered unemployed. In the case of women, who accounted for 22.8% of registrants, the majority of unemployed were aged between 30 and 44.
- **23 February 2007** Two sport programmes, Girls On The Move and the Community Sport Programme designed by the Malta Sports Council have just been launched. Girls on the Move is aimed at girls aged nine to 14 and focuses on providing recreation in a two-hour programme of activities on a weekly basis. The Community Sports Programme is a national programme in collaboration with the Education Division. It will be an after-school programme from 2.45 to 4.15 p.m. with weekly sessions in blocks of 10 sessions per term.
- **23 February 2007** Italian airline Meridiana was so satisfied with the results achieved by its Bologna-Malta service last summer it has decided to extend the schedule by two months this year. The twice weekly service will be launched on March 25 and will run until September 30. Meridiana had inaugurated the Malta route on June 1, last year.
- **23 February 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami received the Letters of Credence by the Ambassador of Tunisia, Mohamed Ali Ganzoui, and the Letters of Commission by the High Commissioner of Cyprus, Athena K. Mavronicola. The ceremonies took place in the Ambassadors' Room, at The Palace, Valletta.
- **23 February 2007** The building of the first Crafts Incubation Centre, in Gozo, has just been completed. This is part of a project carried out under the EU Structural Funds Programme for Malta 2004-2006, co-financed under the European Regional Development Fund.
- **23 February 2007** Work on the development of the Ta' Qali National Park, extending it by 30%, is about to start, Rural Affairs and Environment Minister

George Pullicino said. The works are scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. The project, which includes the transformation of the former runway into the rest of the park, is estimated to cost Lm250,000.

- **23 February 2007** The government is expected to spend Lm4.43 million this year on the development of the tourist product, Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said. Of the total amount, Lm3.8 million would be EU funds, while the rest would come from the government; Lm3.15 million would be spent in Malta and the rest in Gozo. The Malta Tourism Authority would be investing almost Lm500,000 on safeguarding the coast and historical heritage, rural, urban and EU projects, as well as the management of the shoreline and tourist areas.
- **23 February 2007** At the end of last year, the number of licensed motor vehicles stood at 278,421, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 76.1% were private vehicles. Commercial vehicles made up 16.3%. New licences issued during the fourth quarter of last year amounted to 2,973. Private vehicles accounted for 2,299 new licences, or 77.3% of the total.
- **24 February 2007** Catholic Malta will finally be blessed with its first saint on June 3 when Dun Gorg Preca will be canonised, together with three other Blesseds, during a ceremony at the Vatican, in Rome. The declaration was made by Pope Benedict XVI during a solemn 45-minute meeting at the Vatican's 15th century Sala del Concistorio.
- **24 February 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure last month amounted to Lm24.1 million. The National Statistics Office said this is a very marginal improvement on the shortfall recorded for January last year because an increase of Lm2 million in recurrent revenue was offset by a corresponding increase of just over Lm1.8 million in total expenditure.
- **24 February 2007** World class tenor José Carreras will be performing to a 3,000-strong audience in Valletta's St George's Square on June 8, NnG Promotions - who have reached an agreement with the tenor's management - have announced. During a press conference held at Le Meridien Phoenicia, in St Julians NnG's Anton Attard said Mr Carreras will be in Malta as part of the Mediterranean Passion Tour. Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said it was an honour for Malta to welcome Mr Carreras.
- **24 February 2007** The fight against illegal migration and human trafficking has been identified as one of the top priorities for the European Commission for next year. Approving its annual policy strategy for next year, the Brussels executive said the implementation of new measures against illegal migration will be of topmost importance.
- **24 February 2007** A delegation from the International Red Cross met officials of the Malta Red Cross Society with the aim of helping the local branch in its humanitarian activities among refugees and other immigrant affairs. The delegation visited the government open and close reception centres in order to assess possible areas of assistance. It also paid a visit to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs where the issue of illegal immigration was discussed with senior officials from the ministry and from the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity.
- **25 February 2007** Government is allocating an "extra" Lm1 million to Gozo, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said, attributing the additional funds to the fact that the economy was doing well and stressing that the move was in line with its commitment to maximise the island's major potential. Dr Gonzi was speaking at the launch of Malta Enterprise incentives that have been reviewed and tweaked to suit Gozo's specific needs - schemes that would

attract investment, generate employment, stimulate and accelerate its economic transformation and guarantee even more success.

- **25 February 2007** Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care Louis Deguara said that according to a World Health Organisation European Region report, the prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus, among the top five of the most significant diseases in Malta, is expected to increase from 39,000 cases in the year 2000 to 57,000 by 2030. Addressing a seminar on the management of diabetes organised by the Malta College of Family Doctors in Attard, Dr Deguara said diabetes was the most prevalent risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the major causes of death.
- **25 February 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona paid his first pastoral visit to the Gozitan diocese where he spent the morning with members of the Gozitan clergy, praying and reflecting on the "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" - the theme chosen for Lent.
- **25 February 2007** Last Wednesday the Malta Union of Tourist Guides (MUTG) celebrated World Tourist Guides' Day, an annual event organised by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations. The MUTG joined 41 other countries in celebrating this special day by launching a new theme tour entitled "Movie Moments".
- **25 February 2007** Government is planning new schemes to help local councils take environmental initiatives in their locality, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs Tonio Borg said. The new scheme, co-ordinated by the Department of Local Councils, will replace the previous Sebbah Pajjizek initiative.
- **26 February 2007** A motion on the SmartCity project is to be presented to Parliament this week, the Prime Minister said during a dialogue meeting in Gozo. Dr Lawrence Gonzi said that this was a project which would ultimately be creating 5,600 jobs, including 3,600 in IT. Under an agreement with Dubai-based Tecom Investments, Ricasoli Industrial Estate will be transformed into a state-of-the-art ICT and media city over a number of years. The government will have a 9% shareholding in the Lm100 million project.
- **26 February 2007** Recent research conducted by the Arts Council in England has showed that relaxing music has beneficial effect on anxiety, slows down the heart rate, reduces blood pressure, enhances the immune response and lessens pain perception, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care Louis Deguara said. Dr Deguara was speaking at the opening of a Valletta Creative Forum seminar on Art and Health - the Well-Being of Maltese Society, at Mount Carmel Hospital in Attard on Saturday.
- **26 February 2007** Music, parties, sport activities and especially informative discussions will be the order of the day as Malta joins 26 other countries for the EU's 50th birthday party. The celebrations also include three days of events at Nadur after the local council secured a €60,000 grant from the European Parliament. "We're celebrating 50 years of peace and prosperity... Now let's look way beyond," Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo told a news conference, as he unveiled the programme with the theme Flimkien mill-1957 (Together since 1957).
- **26 February 2007** The government has invested Lm116,000 to improve roads in Sta Lucija, Urban Development and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said during a visit to Dawret it-Torri. The works are included in the programme for the building of residential roads between last year and the next. Dawret it-Torri is part of the locality's ring road and the work includes improvements to the pavement opposite residences.
- **27 February 2007** The Maltese have emerged as the most religious people in the EU. An EU-wide survey found that 88% of the Maltese consider religion as

"a very important aspect" of their life, topping the survey's "religious" table. They are followed by the Cypriots (86%) and Romanians (82%). The least religious are the Czechs and the Danes, with 72 and 70%. The local survey of 500 respondents was conducted in Malta last November by Misco.

- **27 February 2007** The Water Services Corporation has reduced its need for a government subsidy by Lm4.3 million since 2005, while also improving its efficiency and cutting its losses, Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt told Parliament. Speaking at the opening of a two-day debate on the financial estimates of the corporation, Dr Gatt said the WSC was next year expected to spend Lm22.2 million as recurrent expenditure and Lm11.6 million as capital.
- **27 February 2007** Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt gave notice to Parliament of a motion for the transfer of government-owned land in Ricasoli to SmartCity (Malta) Ltd for the creation of SmartCity. He also tabled the draft agreement reached between the government and Tecom Investments on the development of the project as well as the memorandum of understanding and articles of association of SmartCity (Malta) Ltd, a joint venture in which the government will have a 9% stake.
- **27 February 2007** A new forum has brought together 27 voluntary organisations with extremely diverse agendas and views to gauge the various forces affecting family life. The family forum was established on the initiative of the National Family Commission in its attempt to ensure all the voices in society are heard. "Many have commented that we risked facing Babel, but in a family, there are always discordant views and we prefer hearing the different opinions than allow silence to shroud reality," Commission chairman Sandro Spiteri said. He was speaking before the forum's first meeting kicked off in the presence of Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina.
- **27 February 2007** The International Office of the University Students' Council (KSU) is holding the One World Week on campus until Friday. KSU represents around 10,000 students, about 1,000 of whom are international students studying here while 130 are Maltese students studying abroad. Minister for Tourism and Culture Francis Zammit Dimech, who inaugurated One World Week, said there are more foreign students at the university than the total number of students who made it to this educational institution 20 years ago.
- **27 February 2007** Agenzija Appogg and the police signed a protocol establishing detailed procedures to be followed when dealing with child abuse. During a press conference, Foundation for Social Welfare Services chief executive Joe Gerada explained that the protocol establishes how a report of child abuse should be dealt with by police and social workers to avoid duplicating work. It also provides police with information on who to contact from the agency if they are the first to receive a report. He said the protocol will help formalise the working relationship between social workers and the police.
- **28 February 2007** Malta formally asked to join the eurozone in January and adopt the euro, the European Union's single currency. The request was made through a letter sent to both the European Commission and the European Central Bank asking both institutions to set in motion the mechanism to provide Malta with a convergence report on whether it has reached all the eurozone membership conditions, known as the Maastricht criteria. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi announced the application at a press briefing. An audio recording can be accessed on the following hyperlink: <http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/News/newsitems/audiorecording%20-27.02.07pmeuro.asp>

28 February 2007 Tourism was up 2.4% in January over the same month last year, according to departure figures compiled by the National Statistics Office. Departures by air and sea in January are estimated at 51,736, the NSO said.

- **28 February 2007** Public institutions based in Malta are not aware of the specific needs and difficulties encountered by small businesses, according to almost 60% of respondents to a study. The research results were announced by the Parliamentary Secretary for the Self-Employed and Small Business, Edwin Vassallo. Mr Vassallo said the government was committed to taking innovative approaches to dealing with the needs of small businesses.
- **28 February 2007** US companies sent 15 vessels for repair at Malta Shipyards in the past two years but no American warships were serviced at the 'yard, Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said. Replying to a parliamentary question, the Minister said that a cruise ship belonging to an American company was expected at the shipyard next month.

March

- **1 March 2007** Some 2,000 Maltese who lost their Australian citizenship can now reapply after the Australian Senate passed a law on Monday. Australian-born individuals who returned to Malta and had to formally renounce their Australian citizenship under the Australian Citizenship act 1948, now have the possibility of obtaining Australian citizenship again.
- **1 March 2007** Carmen Zammit has been appointed Commissioner for Children, succeeding Sonia Camilleri. Two months ago, Ms Camilleri had declared she was not seeking a second term in office. Ms Zammit steps into her new role from her position as director of the Department for Family Welfare.
- **1 March 2007** Enemalta Corporation said it has decided to leave the prices of unleaded petrol, lead replacement petrol, diesel and other fuels unchanged for this month. Unleaded petrol will, therefore, sell at 42c6 per liter; LRP at 45c6 per liter and diesel at 38c9 per liter, Enemalta said.
- **1 March 2007** The Association of Airline Engineers (Malta) (AAE) signed a collective agreement with Lufthansa Technik Malta Ltd. The collective agreement covers working conditions for engineers employed with Lufthansa Technik for the period 2007-2012 and is linked to a major project that will see a new maintenance facility in Malta by 2008 to cater for wide-body A330 and A340 aircraft. This in addition to the narrow-body B737 and A319/A320/A321 that the company already maintains.
- **1 March 2007** The Archbishop, Mgr Paul Cremona, personally thanked police officers during a visit to the police headquarters, in Floriana. Mgr Cremona was welcomed by Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg, Parliamentary Secretary Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Police Commissioner John Rizzo and senior police officers.
- **1 March 2007** Construction work on a new hall and library for the Safi primary school is in its final stages. Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea inspected the work. The hall and the library covered an area of 500 square meters.
- **1 March 2007** Despite a new recovery plan to control the over-fishing of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean, Maltese fishermen have ended up with a

bigger quota to catch next season. According to an international agreement, Malta's quota last year stood at 344 tonnes. However, after its quota was included in the EU's quota, the island has now been allocated a catch of up to 355.59 tonnes by the European Commission.

- **1 March 2007** The government is committed to complete, by the end of this year, residential roads in Luqa included in the Programme for the Building of Residential Streets for 2006-8, Urban Development and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said. The government would have invested about Lm70,000 (about €163,056) in the building of the four Luqa streets included in the programme.
- **1 March 2007** The first Euromed Festival for Composers has just been launched to create a platform for young musicians to showcase their orchestral works. "The sphere of contemporary music has been neglected for a long time and opportunities have been few," Adrian Mamo, chairman of the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, said.
- **1 March 2007** The Zurrieq primary school A within the San Benedettu College has received the Green Flag award, the highest environmental recognition that can be achieved by a school. This is the first state school to get the award, which was presented to the school by Minister of Education, Youth and Employment Louis Galea and Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs George Pullicino.
- **1 March 2007** The Junior Chamber International Malta has launched the 2007 Best Business Plan Competition. Young entrepreneurs who feel they have a great idea for a new business will be judged on innovation and how well their plan is drawn up. The Parliamentary Secretary for the Self-Employed and small Business, Edwin Vassallo, said during the launch that JCI was helping to promote entrepreneurship through learning by doing.
- **2 March 2007** Malta's travel and tourism competitiveness is being hampered by high prices and air transport accessibility, a major international report released has shown. Nevertheless, Malta ranks in 26th place among the 124 countries surveyed in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) first-ever Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report. The placing puts the island above countries like Italy, Croatia and Ireland but below competing Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Cyprus and Greece.
- **2 March 2007** With a combined mean temperature of 14.1°C, January and February taken together were the warmest over the past 52 years, the Meteorological Office said. They were, however, not the warmest in the 85-year history of the Malta International Airport's Meteorological Office. The warmest were January and February of 1955 with a combined mean temperature of 14.5°C.
- **2 March 2007** The labour supply in October increased by 499 persons over the same month in the preceding year, and the registered unemployed rose by 50 persons, the National Statistics Office said.
- **2 March 2007** Applications for children's allowance and supplementary allowances can now be obtained online thanks to a new service launched yesterday. The service is available at www.beneficcjisociali.gov.mt. Speaking during a news conference, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said that over 60,000 people are now eligible to use the service.
- **3 March 2007** The winning designs of German consortium Melitopia, chosen from eight submissions in an international competition, aims to convert Maghtab into a sweet-smelling recreational park. The proposed concept includes an expanse of land for paragliding and hand gliding adventure sports, cells of peace and spirituality, an open-air theatre on the Maghtab

plateau, a sand wave to link the park to the sea, and picnic areas. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, who toured the Maghtab Environmental Complex with Environment and Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino, said the design was chosen on the strength of its numerous open spaces.

- **3 March 2007** The Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Censu Galea, participated in the Fourth Session of the Group of the Western Mediterranean Transport Ministers (GTMO). The most significant outcome of the meeting was the setting up of the 5+5 Transport Ministers' Group to jointly examine the priorities of the Mediterranean region, the government said.
- **3 March 2007** The Maltese and American governments were making progress on topics of significant interest to potential American investors. US Ambassador Molly Bordonaro was addressing the annual general meeting of AmCham Malta (the Maltese-American Chamber of Commerce) at the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, in Valletta.
- **3 March 2007** Lifecycle challengers will go east this year, cycling 2,250 kilometres from Romania to Germany in August to raise funds for St Luke's Hospital's Renal Unit. Health, the Elderly and Community Care Minister Louis Deguara said that since Lifecycle started it collected Lm331,000 (€771022.59) to improve the quality of life and healthcare of local patients and their families. He praised the organisation and thanked it for its dedication and for showing more commitment towards getting more organ donors.
- **3 March 2007** Men are slightly more interested in promotions than women and have a higher level of decision-making power, a survey carried out by the National Statistics Office and the National Council of Women shows. In fact, the survey reveals that 54% of women and 58% of men are interested in a promotion. On the other hand, more women than men admitted to not being interested in a promotion at work.
- **3 March 2007** Over 1,500 calls were received by the euro line 154 last month, a spokesman for the National Euro Changeover Committee said. The number of calls marked a decrease over the previous month, when the number of calls almost reached 2,000, bringing the total number to 3,451.
- **3 March 2007** The MCAST is preparing a master plan for its expansion over the next 10 years. The campus will provide space and facilities for students who wish to follow a vocational education and training course, Education, Youth and Employment Minister Louis Galea said. Millions of liri will continue to be invested in infrastructure and equipment, the Minister said when he presided over the first MCAST graduation ceremony which this year included 674 graduates.
- **3 March 2007** Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, participated in a US government-sponsored International Visitor Leadership Programme in America. Meetings and visits in the US focused on immigration policy, environmental and alternative energy initiatives, business opportunities, and the US-EU relationship
- **3 March 2007** About 2,000 rebate requests on energy-efficient domestic appliances have been received by the Malta Resources Authority (MRA) since December. The scheme, announced in the budget for this year, enables consumers to request a 20% - up to Lm50 (€116) - discount on energy efficient domestic appliances. Between 70 and 100 requests a day are being made, George Cassar, MRA senior analyst, said.
- **3 March 2007** Products ranging from euro coin albums to dog-litter kits to head massagers were displayed by teams of enterprising young students forming a number of Young Enterprise companies at the HSBC Young Enterprise Trade Fair 2007. The fair was launched in the presence of Edwin

Vassallo, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Businesses and Enterprise, and Sally Robson, chief operating officer, HSBC Malta.

- **4 March 2007** More than 500 people visited the Maghtab Environment Complex in the second open day. Minister George Pullicino said the open day helped visitors better understand how domestic waste management works
- **4 March 2007** President Edward Fenech-Adami and Ms Fenech Adami were treated to lunch prepared by students of the Institute for Tourism Studies as part of his official visit to St Julian's. The students also presented the President with a Lm200 (€465) donation for the Community Chest Fund which was collected during fund-raising activities and a hamper with traditional Maltese products prepared by the students.
- **4 March 2007** The need for a new regulatory framework for measures to reconcile family life and a period of studies for young women in the European Union was discussed last week during a hearing organised at the European Parliament by the Committee on women's rights and gender equality. The hearing was based on an own initiative report by Greek MEP Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou on the same subject, aiming to identify effective measures to help young women in the EU to reconcile family life with their studies.
- **4 March 2007** The European Commission said that an identity card is sufficient for Maltese travellers to move throughout the EU and that there is no need that Maltese citizens show a passport to be admitted into any of the other 26 EU member states. This was made clear by the European Commission in response to questions put by MEP Simon Busuttil at the European Parliament following complaints he received by various Maltese citizens over the issue.
- **5 March 2007** Speaking during a political activity in Gzira, Prime Minister Dr Gonzi discussed the economic and fiscal upturns and the prospects of a good year ahead. Through tax deductions, the government had channelled Lm12 million (€27.9 million) into people's pockets and, yet, statistics show that government revenue had increased in January.
- **5 March 2007** The Malta National Laboratory has just been awarded the international accreditation certificate ISO 17025 by the Malta Standards Authority. The accreditation was awarded after a process of inspections carried out last August, which confirmed that the MNL's tests had attained international standards.
- **5 March 2007** The Prime Minister inaugurated the embellishment works at the Vittoriosa Waterfront during a mini Notte Bianca. Landscaping work was listed as an obligation by the government when the contracts were signed with the two original consortia in 1999, the Prime Minister said.
- **6 March 2007** The pre-budget document is expected to be published by the end of June, earlier than in the last two years, according to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. Speaking earlier to top officials from the Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprise, the GRTU, the Prime Minister underlined the importance of mapping out his government's budgetary proposals beforehand.
- **6 March 2007** Malta's Ambassador for climate change Michael Zammit Cutajar was nominated as one of an 11-member group to advise the EU on a future climate change policy.
- **6 March 2007** The number of women holding a degree in Malta has surpassed that of men although the overall number of people who have followed tertiary education is still low when compared to the EU average. According to

statistics released by Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, to mark this week's celebration of Women's Day, until June of last year 13% of Maltese women aged 25-59 held a university degree.

- **6 March 2007** Summertime in Malta this year will start on March 25 at 2 a.m. when clocks will be moved an hour forward, and will end on October 28 at 3 a.m.
- **6 March 2007** A total of Lm3,400 (€7919) will be invested in an animal neutering campaign thanks to Yelp for Help's Furrballs festival held last November. The Community Chest Fund presented Yelp for Help with funds left over from the charity extravaganza L-Istringa, which were specifically allocated to the neutering of stray cats and dogs by the committee.
- **6 March 2007** The government paid a total of Lm171,208 (€398807) in subsidies to 1,972 applications for solar heating energy savers between 2005 and the end of last month, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said. Replying to a parliamentary question the Prime Minister said that the bulk – Lm148,125 (€345038) to 1,558 applicants, was paid last year.
- **6 March 2007** Malta can play a major role in getting companies interested in research and design of renewable energy and energy efficient goods, developing and testing them in Malta and showcasing them from here, Anton Bartolo, from The Euro-Mediterranean Initiative for Technology and Innovation, said. Mr Bartolo was speaking at a seminar on the theme Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, A Business Opportunity for Malta.
- **6 March 2007** Malta's non-resident Ambassador to Romania, Alain Mangion, presented his credentials to the President of Romania, Traian Basescu at the Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest. The Ambassador and the President discussed various issues of mutual interest, including the problems faced by Malta in illegal immigration and the Maltese proposal for an EU-Arab League Summit.
- **7 March 2007** The SmartCity project should make Malta the EU flagship in ICT, Government Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said. Replying to parliamentary questions during a debate on the project in the National Audit Office Accounts Committee, the Minister said that through the project, the work of the Maltese would be internationalised for the first time
- **7 March 2007** Ratings agency Fitch has revised Malta's forecast euro entry by a year to 2008. A consistent and sharp drop in inflation in the last few months, together with a downward trend in the country's debt, has prompted Fitch to take a more optimistic stand, a top official from the ratings agency said.
- **7 March 2007** Minister of Investment, Industry and Information Technology Austin Gatt met representatives of the Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises - GRTU to discuss the SmartCity project.
- **7 March 2007** Malta achieved some progress last year in reaching the EU's "Lisbon" goals, surpassing Poland in an overall scorecard prepared annually by the London based think-tank Centre for European Reform (CER). In the previous two editions of the EU-wide study, Malta placed at the bottom of the rankings.
- **7 March 2007** The Archbishop paid a visit to the Maltapost head office in Marsa. Mgr Paul Cremona was welcomed by Minister for Investment, Industry and Information Technology, Austin Gatt, Maltapost chairman David Stellini and the board of directors, and CEO Joseph Gafa'.
- **7 March 2007** Mark Miceli Farrugia, president of the Malta-US Chamber of Commerce, has been appointed Ambassador to the United States.

Christopher Grima has been appointed Ambassador to Austria and to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

- **8 March 2007** A thanksgiving Mass was celebrated at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta to mark the 100th year since the foundation of the Christian doctrine society, MUSEUM by Dun Gorg Preca. The celebration, which was presided over by Archbishop Paul Cremona, forms part of a series of Masses to be organised throughout the year by all the parishes and the MUSEUM to commemorate this anniversary.
- **8 March 2007** Plans for the privatisation of Enemalta's petroleum and gas divisions were moving ahead rapidly, with the process for the latter expected to be concluded in or immediately after summer, Minister of Investment, Industry and Information Technology Austin Gatt told Parliament.
- **8 March 2007** More than 7,500 persons visited Mater Dei Hospital between 2001 and 2006 and another 1,500 in the first two months of this year, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said. Replying to a parliamentary question the Prime Minister said that the Foundation for Medical Services sent invitations to trade unions, councils, centres for the elderly, professional associations, political parties, voluntary organisations, band clubs, sports organisations and other non-governmental organisations.
- **8 March 2007** Low-cost airlines will be operating to Malta this year from Luton in the UK, Dublin in Ireland and Pisa in Italy (Ryanair); Bologna in Italy (Meridiana), Stuttgart and Cologne in Germany (Germanwings) and Barcelona in Spain (Clickair). The information was given by Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech when replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 March 2007** The Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations presented a manifesto to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi highlighting the services needed to create greater gender equality on the occasion of Women's Day being marked today. The Care Services Manifesto urges the EU and individual countries to invest more in care services, especially in children's care.
- **8 March 2007** The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) inaugurated its new premises at Gattard House in Blata I-Bajda. The opening, by Minister of Family and Social Solidarity Dolores Cristina, was followed by a networking session for members of the diplomatic corps and the judiciary on the theme A Meeting Of Prepared Minds: Networking For Further And Better Collaboration.
- **8 March 2007** Women in Malta are the most fairly paid in the EU, at least when compared to their male colleagues. According to the 2007 Equality Report published by the European Commission in Brussels, the difference in pay on the island between men and women in 2005 stood at just 4%, the lowest level of the 27 EU member states.
- **8 March 2007** Martin Galea is the new president of the Federation of Industry, succeeding Adrian Bajada. The other FOI council members are Helga Ellul, deputy president; Adrian Bajada, Anton Borg, Ian Mizzi and Anthony Tabone vice presidents; and Joe Cortis, Andy Gatesy, Martin Hignett, Joseph Montebello, Joe Pace, Santo Portera, Sergio Vella and Angelo Xuereb, members.
- **9 March 2007** The newly established group of world experts to advise the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, on energy and climate change met for the first time in Brussels, on Wednesday. The advisors, who will act in a personal capacity, have expertise on both energy policy and climate change. The meeting was attended by President Barroso. Malta's

Ambassador on climate change, Michael Zammit Cutajar is one of the 11 experts.

- **9 March 2007** Italy is seeking Malta's support for its bid to organise the 2015 World Expo in Milan. The issue was discussed during a meeting between Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo, Italian Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Vittorio Craxi and Milan's mayor, Letizia Moratti, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Valletta.
- **9 March 2007** The percentage of women with a tertiary education level rose to 9% in 2005, the National Statistics Office said. Its data focused on female participation in education and employment. Women with a tertiary level of education were more likely to be employed than women with a lower level, according to the National Statistics Office. The percentage of employed women with a secondary level of education was 23, while that among those with a tertiary level was 76%.
- **10 March 2007** Malta will have to reach tough environmental targets by 2020 following the conclusion of a two-day European Union summit in Brussels, although the precise levels have still to be established. Addressing a press conference following the summit, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi admitted that the binding targets will not be easy to meet, but he added that Malta was determined to give its fair share in the fight against global warming.
- **10 March 2007** Provisional estimates indicate that last year the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose by 2.9% in real terms. It reached Lm2.1 billion (€4.9 billion), an increase of 5.5% at market prices when compared to 2005, the National Statistics Office said. Growth in value-added was generated primarily by construction, financial intermediation, real estate, renting and business activities, and community, social and personal services, including remote gaming activities.
- **11 March 2007** Malta International Airport's new Schengen area in the Arrivals Lounge was the venue for the fourth session of the NSTF Mini European Assembly last Thursday evening. MIA chief executive Peter Bollech delivered the keynote address on the philosophical aspect of freedom of movement and the historical element of how cross-border access developed.
- **11 March 2007** President Emeritus Guido de Marco, delivered a keynote lecture entitled "The Mediterranean Dilemma: A Bridge or a Great Divide?", at the Festsaal of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. The evening was jointly organised by the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies of the University of Malta, the Academic Association for Foreign Affairs in Austria, the Austrian Association for Foreign Policy, the United Nations Association of Austria and the Embassy of Malta in Vienna.
- **11 March 2007** Malta underlined its continued commitment to work together with the EU on better regulations related to maritime safety. Addressing a conference in Brussels organised by the European Community Shipowners Association (ECSA), Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea said that Malta favours all initiatives being taken to make shipping safer.
- **12 March 2007** The Malta Labour Party obtained 53.2% of the votes in Saturday's local council election, whilst the Nationalist Party got 43.9% of the votes. Detailed results can be viewed on: <http://doi.webdev.gov/EN/elections/2007/03/default.asp>
- **12 March 2007** Minister for Investment, Industry and Information Technology Austin Gatt discussed the SmartCity project at a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise led by Victor A. Galea. Mr Galea said that this

unique project will make the country the EU flagship in ICT, supporting the internationalisation of Malta, and attracting global ICT leaders to the island.

- **13 March 2007** Talks are underway for the international launch of Smart City in a major European capital, Investments, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt told a parliamentary committee. Another three sub-launches will be held in other European cities.
- **13 March 2007** The visible trade gap widened by Lm11.3 million (€26.32 million) in January when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. Provisional data for international trade showed that the visible trade gap in January stood at Lm34.5 million (€80.36 million), Lm11.3 million (€26.32 million) more than in the previous January, the National Statistics Office said.
- **14 March 2007** The first step in the transfer of services from St Luke's Hospital to the Lm250 million Mater Dei Hospital will be made next month with the multi-phased migration of telephone lines, Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Finance Tonio Fenech said.
- **14 March 2007** Minister of Investment, Industry and Information Technology Austin Gatt stressed that although the government would only have a 9% stake in SmartCity Malta, no changes to the project could take place without its approval. The Minister was speaking at the opening of the debate in the House on a motion to transfer land at Ricasoli for the project.
- **15 March 2007** The European Commission has decided to send a delegation to Malta for talks with the government over hunting. The delegation, which will include top officials from DG Environment, is scheduled to hold meetings with government officials and other interested parties on March 28 and 29, just days before the start of the spring hunting season, which the Commission says breaches EU law.
- **15 March 2007** The government has decided to grant automatic indefinite contracts to employees who have been engaged with the public service for four continuous years on a fixed-term contract. Malta's employment rules now comply with EU regulations.
- **16 March 2007** The 12-month moving average inflation rate last month dropped to 2.4 per cent from 2.5 per cent in January, the National Statistics Office said. The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up by 0.2 per cent in February over the previous month, the NSO added.
- **16 March 2007** Air Malta has been appointed official carrier for the AEGEE-Europe network meeting to be held in Malta at the end of next month
- **17 March 2007** Gozo Channel has registered a profit of Lm282,000 (€656,883), a three per cent increase over the previous 12 months.
- **17 March 2007** The cost of roaming charges when using mobile phones is expected to tumble by summer's end. EU telecommunications ministers meeting in Hanover gave their go-ahead for the European Commission to enact legislation to control the cost of mobile phone roaming calls. Sources close to the Commission said the legislation "will probably cap the cost of an international mobile call to a maximum of €0.50 a minute".
- **18 March 2007** The Scouts Association of Malta this weekend joins other Scout associations to mark the centenary of Scouting worldwide and in Malta with an event called 'Festa Scout' at Ta' Qali.
- **18 March 2007** A new protective carpet suitable for heavy duty foot traffic has been laid on the unique marble inlaid floor of St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta by the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation.

- **18 March 2007** Nadur Council launched a programme of activities, featuring famous Italian singers and groups, under the title Flimkien, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, after having been awarded funds from the European Union.
- **19 March 2007** Training sessions at Mater Dei Hospital for over 300 hospital staff are scheduled to start next Monday, marking the beginning of the last training phase for employees. This comes hot on the heels of a practice session held at the new hospital on Thursday when the migration planning team and senior St Luke's Hospital personnel evaluated and assessed the training methods.
- **20 March 2007** European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said Maltese laws outlawing divorce are compatible with EU rules, adding that the EU has no intention of interceding with the government to introduce divorce because that is not within the bloc's competence.
- **20 March 2007** Route buses carried 12.5 per cent more passengers in January and February over the same eight-week period last year, as the number of public transport users increased by more than 460,000 to 4.1 million.
- **21 March 2007** Parliament cleared the way for the SmartCity project by unanimously approving a motion for the transfer of land at Ricasoli for the \$300 million ICT project.
- **21 March 2007** The Cabinet accepted the adjudicating committee's recommendation on the commercialisation of Enemalta's Gas Division to consider the consortium GASCO as the preferred bidder. GASCO consists of Multigas Ltd, which is a Maltese company, and Liguigas SpA of Italy, each having a 50 per cent shareholding.
- **21 March 2007** Bring-in-sites in various towns and villages will be "patrolled" by primary school children who, apart from "guarding" the area, will assist the public in separating waste, WasteServ declared.
- **22 March 2007** The European Commission decided to send a formal request to Malta to amend its car registration tax rules which discriminate against second-hand cars imported from other member states.
- **22 March 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo delivered the keynote address at an event held in Rome by the Italian Foreign Ministry's Osservatorio del Mediterraneo to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome.
- **22 March 2007** Nadur will be holding a number of activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The programme entitled Flimkien, organised by the Nadur local council, with the financial backing of the EU, will incorporate concerts, exhibitions, folk dances, and a traditional market.
- **22 March 2007** The Water Services Corporation launches its new website (www.wsc.com.mt) to coincide with World Water Day 2007, which is celebrated each year on March 22.
- **22 March 2007** A total 773 patients were admitted to the Intensive Therapy Unit at St Luke's Hospital last year. The Minister of Health, the Elderly and Community Care Louis Deguara was answering to a parliamentary question.
- **22 March 2007** The European Commission plans to have a series of common freephone services across member states, providing assistance to vulnerable people, primarily children.
- **23 March 2007** The European Parliament Office in Malta and the Forum Malta in Europe are marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which gave birth to what is today the EU, with two exhibitions in Valletta.

- **23 March 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami received three new ambassadors, none of whom are resident in Malta. They are Albanian ambassador Llesh Kola; Eudoro Jean Esquivel, the ambassador of Panama; and Carlos Abin, ambassador of Uruguay.
- **23 March 2007** Republic Day this year came earlier than usual for Carmen Testa, a Maltese-Australian who has just been bestowed with the Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika in Melbourne. The national award was awarded to Ms Testa on behalf of President Eddie Fenech Adami by Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg - who is visiting Maltese communities in Australia - as a token for years spent helping Maltese migrants integrate into the community.
- **24 March 2007** The number of unemployed last month dropped by 482 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 March 2007** The retail price index went up by 0.26 per cent last month, mainly due to an increase of 3.87 per cent in the clothing and footwear index, brought about mainly by price increases in outerwear, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 March 2007** The average annual rainfall between 1997-2006 compared to 1967-1976 went down from 570.81mm to 503.89mm, a dip of 11.7 per cent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 March 2007** Cruise passenger traffic last month amounted to 3,040 persons, a drop of 2,848 passengers compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 March 2007** Malta joined the other 26 member states of the European Union to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which gave birth to the Union. Photos of this event may be viewed on: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/photo_gallery/treatyofrome1.asp
- **25 March 2007** In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, EU leaders, including Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, gathered in Berlin together with German Chancellor Angela Merkel since Germany currently holds the rotating EU presidency. Photos of this event may be viewed on: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/photo_gallery/treatyofrome2.asp
- **25 March 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami attended celebrations organised by the Belgian authorities in Brussels commemorating the 50th anniversary from the signing of the Treaty of Rome. Dr Fenech Adami was invited to join the Belgian celebrations by King Albert II, who presided over the celebrations at Europe's "capital". The Maltese President joined other EU leaders and prominent EU figures in a symposium at the Royal Palace in Brussels which discussed 'The significance of European integration'. The symposium was addressed by King Albert, the president of the European Parliament Hans Gert Pöttering, Dr Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of Latvia, and Italian Interior Minister Giuliano Amato.
- **26 March 2007** Chief Justice Vincent De Gaetano is in Luxembourg as guest of the Court of Justice of the European Communities which is holding a two-day symposium as part of the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.
- **26 March 2007** The Malta Institute of Health and Safety has won accreditation for the international version of the UK's National Examining Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH), a leading awarding body in health and safety qualifications.
- **26 March 2007** Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Frendo chaired the opening session of the Commonwealth Connects E-Partnership Summit in New Delhi.

- **27 March 2007** Giovanni Nicolo Pappaffy, a Maltese of Greek origin who lived between 1792 and 1886, is being remembered this week during a series of events organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Greek Embassy.
- **27 March 2007** A total of 355,112 nights were spent in hotels in January, an increase of 4.2 per cent over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said. Year-on-year, the average length of stay in collective accommodation establishments remained unchanged at 7.7 nights.
- **27 March 2007** The European Commission is determined to have new roaming tariffs by June despite the rejection by a European Parliament committee last week of a proposal for cheaper fees for all mobile phone users.
- **27 March 2007** Citizens from the 13 EU member states forming part of the eurozone have started using a new euro coin marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The coin shows Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome where the treaty was signed on March 25, 1957.
- **27 March 2007** Cameras placed at Valletta's entrance and exit points have recorded an average of 17,000 vehicles entering the capital city on each weekday of last month. The number of cars entering the capital decreased slightly at weekends, Malta Transport Authority official Konrad Pule stated. A total of 340,000 were recorded during the entire month. The exercise was carried out using the Controlled Vehicular Access system.
- **27 March 2007** The Christian Democrat Students (SDM) won all 10 seats on the Students' University Council (KSU) last week, the students' organisation said.
- **27 March 2007** Pierre Fava has been re-elected president of the Malta Employers' Association.
- **28 March 2007** German low-cost airline Germanwings launched its service to Malta with direct flights from Cologne and Stuttgart.
- **28 March 2007** The Maltese fisheries sector will receive its largest ever injection of funds over the next seven years, after the EU finalised its legal process to vote allocations under the new European Fisheries Fund (EFF) programme.
- **28 March 2007** Malta was given full marks by the European Commission in a report analysing how the 27 member states are dealing with the implementation of the EU's Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- **29 March 2007** All schools in Malta - state, Church and independent - will be on holiday on June 4, the day after the canonisation of Dun Gorg Preca at the Vatican. This was announced by Minister of Education, Youth and Employment Louis Galea.
- **29 March 2007** The government said it will be forking out Lm5,000 (€11,646) to help Maltese youngsters who would like to accompany Archbishop Paul Cremona on a trip to Australia in July next year to celebrate World Youth Day.
- **29 March 2007** Tourism in February rose by 6.9 per cent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office has estimated. Total tourist expenditure increased by 13.1 per cent to reach Lm16.2 million for the month, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 March 2007** Economic and Finance Ministers from European Union member states have agreed to banking reform establishing new and cheaper services as from 2009. The decision was made on Tuesday during the Economic and Finance Ministers Meeting in Brussels attended by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **29 March 2007** There were 812 births to single mothers last year, Health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **29 March 2007** A total of 5,765 foreigners received treatment at St Luke's Hospital last year. Bills totalled Lm149,281 (€347,731) but only Lm80,904 (€188,455) were paid. Health Minister Louis Deguara said Lm12,139 (€28,276) were waived after the patients produced documents proving they were entitled to free medical care. The minister was replying to a question in Parliament.
- **29 March 2007** The Armed Forces of Malta plan to engage an additional 100 soldiers, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said. He said that 305 applied at the last call for application.
- **29 March 2007** An Employment and Training Corporation project aimed at encouraging women to set up their own business was launched by Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and the Self-Employed. The project seeks to promote an entrepreneurial culture among women and to increase the rate of females starting and managing their own businesses.
- **30 March 2007** The police have launched a 'crime stopper number' to encourage the public to report crime. Police Commissioner John Rizzo said the move was a continuation of the police campaign on crime prevention.
- **30 March 2007** Minister of Justice and Home Affairs and deputy Prime Minister Tonio Borg, on a visit to New Zealand, met Prime Minister Helen Clarke during a Commonwealth Local Government Conference where he was representing Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. Malta is at present chair-in-office of the Commonwealth.
- **31 March 2007** The two mobile phone operators - Vodafone Malta and Go Mobile - will be cutting roaming rates. Vodafone will reduce its roaming tariffs for customers using the roaming service across the 27 European Union countries as of April 1, the company's chief executive officer Hatem Dowidar told a press conference. Go Mobile is expected to announce cheaper roaming rates shortly, offering a new and more convenient tariff scheme, the company said in a statement.
- **31 March 2007** The Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses has elected a new president, Paul Pace, who takes over from Rudolph Cini. Maria Cutajar is vice president and Colin Galea is secretary. The general secretary is George Saliba, Raymond Chetcuti is financial secretary and Raymond Chetcuti, Lora Pullicino, Chris Azzopardi, Rowland Bezzina, Corinne Ward and Aaron Tonna are members.
- **31 March 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure of the government for the first two months of the year amounted to Lm42.8 million (€99.7 million), the National Statistics Office said.
- **31 March 2007** The Central Bank anticipates it will have to replace close to Lm430 million (€1001.6 million) of notes in circulation and about Lm20.6 million (€47.9 million) in coins if Malta changes over to the euro in January next year.
- **31 March 2007** The World Economic Forum has ranked the Maltese government as the second most successful administration in the world in promoting the use of information and communications technologies. Malta is also the world leader in high-speed monthly broadband subscription according to the WEF's Global Information Technology Report 2006-2007. Malta is in the top 10 rankings for the priority the government gives to ICTs for the availability and efficiency of online services and for the per capita quantum of high-tech exports.
- **31 March 2007** Malta was one of the first countries to sign the United Nations Convention On The Rights of Persons With Disabilities, which opened for signatures yesterday. The treaty aims to protect the rights of the world's 650 million persons with a disability by targeting various sectors, including

education, accessibility, health, work, entertainment, participation in politics, equality and protection from discrimination.

APRIL

- **1 April 2007** The annual official celebrations of Freedom Day, marking the 28th anniversary of the closure of the British military base, were held in Vittoriosa. President Eddie Fenech Adami, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and AFM commander Brigadier Carmel Vassallo received a salute by the army as they arrived near the monument. The President inspected the guard of honour before placing flowers on the monument, accompanied by Dr Gonzi.
- **1 April 2007** Ground-breaking work published last week in the 'Proceedings of the Royal Society A' by an academic from the Faculty of Science of the University of Malta and his research team is making headlines in the international scientific press. So much so, that it is being reported as breaking news by New Scientist.com, the Website of New Scientist, which is cited as the world's No. 1 science and technology news service.
- **1 April 2007** Cospicua and Marsa were the joint winners of the Open Shield in the traditional Freedom Day regatta - the first time ever the honours were shared. Both teams obtained 40 points each and representatives of each took it in turns to go up for the shield, which they will be keeping for six months each. Cospicua, having obtained better placings in more races, will keep the shield for the first six months.
- **1 April 2007** Collaboration between the European Union and the Arab League was discussed extensively at an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in Bremen, Germany. Foreign Minister Michael Frendo said the talks showed growing support for Malta's initiative to develop a stronger structured dialogue between the two organisations. He said that, as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, it was time to strengthen a structured dialogue with the member states of the Arab League on issues such as reform, the politics of moderation, development, energy security and climate change.
- **1 April 2007** More than 10 per cent of business establishments, which were awarded FAIR certificates after committing themselves to display correct pricing in both Maltese lira and euro, are in Gozo. Victoria has surpassed even Valletta as the town with the greatest number of establishments having been awarded FAIR. In fact, 90 shops in the Gozitan capital have joined the scheme that ensures euro conversion fairness. With 85 establishments, Valletta is five behind.
- **1 April 2007** European Union citizens are twice as generous as citizens of the United States in terms of committing government finance to poor countries, according to EuropeAid, the European Commission's department tasked with implementing external assistance and development aid. Figures released in Brussels last Wednesday week show that last year the Commission, through EuropeAid, committed a record €7.6 billion and disbursed €6.5 billion, 55 per cent and 58 per cent respectively since the 2001 reforms in aid policy. More projects and programmes were implemented than ever before.
- **2 April 2007** This past winter has been the warmest since the Meteorological Office started keeping records in 1922. The Met Office released temperatures for March, closing the figures for the winter season and revealing that at an average of 14.8°C, winter was the warmest in the past 85 years.
- **2 April 2007** Malta has proposed conducting intense maritime border patrols with the Greek navy to combat illegal immigration this summer. The proposal,

known as Nautilus 2, has been submitted to the EU border control agency Frontex, and a decision is expected soon.

- **2 April 2007** Seventy-four per cent of those who have used the internet for e-commerce have shopped online, a survey commissioned by the Malta Communications Authority has found. Four in 10 of the people who have bought things over the net were aged 18 to 29.
- **2 April 2007** The Maltese embassy in Lisbon, led by Ambassador Salv Stellini, is inviting those having relatives or friends living in Portugal to inform them they can voluntarily register at the embassy their presence in that country. They are also to be informed they can seek the services of the embassy in case of need.
- **2 April 2007** A conference on shared memories among Malta, France and Tunisia was organised by Vicki Ann Cremona, the Maltese Ambassador to France, together with the French-Maltese Society Société Maltaise de France in Paris.
- **2 April 2007** St Dorothy's Senior School in Zebbug is cultivating mathematical whiz kids - they recently placed 12th in World Math Day after pitting their wits against thousands of schools from nearly 100 countries.
- **2 April 2007** A basic course in IT has been launched by the Employment and Training Corporation with the cooperation of Microsoft Malta. The aim behind the course is to train persons with little or no experience in using computers.
- **3 April 2007** The Malta Stock Exchange is to be restructured in order to pave the way for its eventual partial privatisation. According to a detailed roadmap, the Stock Exchange will be made into a more flexible organisation by segregating its key activities.
- **3 April 2007** Over 360,000 euro coins starter kits have been ordered by the Central Bank to ensure businesses and the public have small change in hand when the country switches to the euro. A spokesman for the National Euro Changeover Committee said 330,000 starter kits for the public and a further 33,000 for retailers have been ordered from France's Monnaie de Paris, which won the tender for the minting of the Maltese euro coins. If the island meets its target to join the euro by January 1, the starter kits will be available from banks from December 17.
- **3 April 2007** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority has published an updated version of DC2005, called DC2007, which is a compendium of policy and design guidelines mostly for the use of architects and those connected to the construction industry. The document brings together 136 policies under 17 different chapters. The main changes involve not only the inclusion of amendments to policies, but also two new sections.
- **3 April 2007** Wilfred Kennely has been appointed Malta's first resident High Commissioner to India, the government announced. Mr Kennely is the director general of the Federation of Industry, a position he has occupied since January 2005. Between 2001 and 2004 he was executive head of the Malta Council for Science and Technology and before that he was general manager of Standard Publications Ltd for two years. Mr Kennely is also the chairman of the Manoel Theatre.
- **4 April 2007** Almost 5,000 calls were received on the euro line 154 since the beginning of the year - 1,400 of which were made last month. Over 1,900 calls were made in January and a further 1,500 in February.

- **4 April 2007** The Maltese Council of Disabled Persons has welcomed the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and its attached protocol by the government of Malta.
- **5 April 2007** A "community agreement" was signed by the Valletta local council and Appogg agency, formalising a service that has already been provided by a community worker in the locality for a year. In line with Europe's and the government's policy to integrate and personalise services, establishing them within the community, a historical building in Zekka Street, corner with Melita Street, will be refurbished to serve as the local community centre, gathering under one roof a broad spectrum of government entities and services. The idea is to create a one-stop shop for persons with social problems of whom Valletta has its fair share.
- **5 April 2007** The government is issuing - by way of a legal notice - a tax deduction on expenses incurred for the euro changeover, Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Finance Ministry, said. "If you spend Lm1, for example, you can claim Lm2 as a tax deduction, up to a limit of Lm1,000," he explained. The incentive is on specific items, including cash registers, POSs, weighing scales, and even modifications in computer systems, incurred between January 1, 2006, to the end of 2007. Mr Fenech was addressing retailers at a seminar on the euro changeover, organised by the Malta Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises - GRTU.
- **5 April 2007** Malta and South Africa signed an agreement on police cooperation, including organised crime, corruption, arms trafficking, drugs, forensic information and evidence. The agreement was signed at the Foreign Ministry by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo and his South African counterpart Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma. The five-year agreement also covers cooperation against economic crime, including money laundering. Another means of collaboration is through the exchange of scientific or forensic information.
- **5 April 2007** Preparations for the migration from St Luke's Hospital to Mater Dei Hospital continued with the introduction of 150 new extension numbers for the internal phone lines at the existing hospital. This is the first step in the physical migration of services to the new hospital. The new four-digit extension numbers, which will operate for a period alongside the existing ones, have been changed to enable staff and the public to get used to the new system before the migration. Over the next four months, 150 new extension numbers will be introduced every fortnight until all the hospital's 1,200 telephone lines have been covered.
- **5 April 2007** St John's Co-Cathedral, in Valletta, has just launched its official website, packed with information and images of the building and its artefacts. The website includes practical information for those planning to visit the national monument as well as times of religious services and the latest news and events. There is also information on the history of St John's and on the Knights that built it, the works of art housed within and the restoration projects undertaken by the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. The website was developed by Media Consulta, Malta - www.stjohnscocathedral.com.
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- **5 April 2007** The Malta Federation of Industry has been awarded a contract by the European Commission to start carrying out a services survey for Malta under the Joint Harmonised Programme of EU Business and Consumer Surveys as from next month. FOI director general Wilfred Kenely said the federation has the required capability and is equipped to carry out such surveys, having established a unit specifically for this purpose with the assistance and collaboration of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

- **5 April 2007** The Citadel clock bells in Gozo, which have been chiming time in their present location since 1858, will go silent while undergoing restoration. The oldest of the two bells is the quarter strike bell, which is attributed to the early 18th century founders Luca and Mederico Menville of the Ferreria of the Order of St John.
- **7 April 2007** Nine Maltese volunteers spent some time working in Orlu, Nigeria, together with the Opera Don Bonifacio Azione Verde, a non-profit, voluntary humanitarian organisation. Although the work performed was difficult as no electricity was available and, therefore, no power tools could be used, the group managed to complete the building of a primary school. The group also provided food and school education to over 500 orphans under the Italian organisation's custody.
- **7 April 2007** The public employees section of the Union Haddiema Maghqudin said it has reached an agreement with the government over the examination for the recruitment of clerks in the public service. Persons applying for the examination should be at least 17, have five O level passes, including Maltese, English and Mathematics, and a pass in three ECDL modules. The union said it has prepared several courses to assist those who wish to sit for the exam. Those interested can book the course through the UHM.
- **7 April 2007** The Malta Tourism Authority has launched a series of training courses for individuals directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry. The courses are held as part of a European Social Fund Project partly funded by the EU. A training course to be launched this month targets operators working in small to medium tourism enterprises within the accommodation, catering and travel sectors. The aim is to help operators identify the strengths and weaknesses of the people management practices they employ within their business in a bid to increase their competitive edge.
- **7 April 2007** A discussion on Caravaggio Tra l'Italia E Malta: Identità E Patrimonio Comune was held in Syracuse, Sicily last week at the Ex Convento Del Retiro. Ray Bondin and Keith Sciberras both presented papers. Dr Bondin spoke about the Filippo Paladini fresco project at the palace and Dr Sciberras concentrated on the last years of Caravaggio in Malta and Sicily. The meeting was also addressed by the deputy mayor of Syracuse, Fabio Granata. The discussion was part of an EU-funded programme to re-establish cultural links between Sicily and Malta.
- **8 April 2007** The first group of hospital employees will move from St Luke's Hospital to Mater Dei Hospital this week as preparations for the migration of services and facilities intensify. The 10-strong migration planning team is made up of a migration project manager and nine migration facilitators, Mater Dei spokesman Chris Scicluna said.
- **8 April 2007** Last December, Financial Times Business and the London School of Economics approached 50 top thinkers to put forward their vision of Europe for the next 50 years. The result is a publication titled: European Union - The Next Fifty Years, published by FT Business and launched at the London School of Economics on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Project.
- **8 April 2007** Taxes on documents required in foreign adoption processes are to be removed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced. Foreign Minister Michael Frendo is shortly to amend a Legal Notice so that payment for the legalisation of documents needed by couples to adopt children from overseas is waived.

- **8 April 2007** The European Commission has issued a Green Paper for people interested in expressing their views on issues identified in the context of the Review of the Consumer Acquis launched in 2004. The Commission has reviewed the Directives through a comparative analysis of their implementation into national law and research into the perceptions of consumers and business and workshops with member state experts and contract law stakeholders.
- **8 April 2007** The Institute of Maltese Journalists (IGM) has launched the 17th edition of the annual press awards known as the Malta Journalism Awards, with 12 categories.
- **9 April 2007** The collection of poems Viator Errans was presented to President Eddie Fenech Adami by Rose Mary Cachia, daughter of Sir George Borg. The poems were originally published in Weraq tar-Rand, Omero, L-Enejde and Sant'Jermu between 1952-1958 by Sir George under the pen name Viator Errans. Sir George studied at the University of Malta and pursued further studies in law at the University of Catania, in Rome and in England.
- **9 April 2007** The Malta Financial Services Authority and the Austrian Financial Market Authority have just signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing for cooperation in the supervision of cross-border establishments of credit institutions incorporated within the Maltese or Austrian jurisdictions. The memorandum was signed at the MFSA offices in Mriehel by its chairman Joseph V. Bannister and by FMA's executive director Heinrich Traumüller. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance and the Oesterreichische Nationalbank are also signatories to the memorandum.
- **9 April 2007** The European Commission has granted €56,000 to assist the police to increase their capabilities in border control in line with the parameters of the Schengen Convention, the Police Community and Media Relations Unit said. The department is now in line with its commitments under the Schengen Convention, and, therefore, in a position to honour its obligations vis-à-vis the convention, the police said. The eight-month project, which is now finalised, included the training of police officers by several experts from the Italian SIRENE Division (International Police Cooperation Service).
- **10 April 2007** The government has sent its official reply to Brussels contesting the infringement procedure set in motion by the European Commission last July over spring hunting in 2004.
- **10 April 2007** The Armed Forces of Malta has completed a period of training with the assistance of a Belgian Navy Mobile Training Team (MTT). The aim was to further prepare elements of the Maritime Squadron and Air Wing for helicopter operations from AFM patrol vessel P61's flight deck.
- **10 April 2007** The Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division within the Office of the Prime Minister has launched the third call for project proposals under the European Social Fund (ESF) within the Malta Structural Funds Programme 2004-2006.
- **11 April 2007** Motorists will not have to pay to park on the Valletta ring road once the fee-parking scheme is introduced. This is one of the provisions in an agreement signed by the Union Haddiema Maghqudin and the Office of the Prime Minister. The agreement also gives public sector employees working in Valletta the possibility to work flexible hours in order to cut the costs of parking in the capital. The agreement covers the setting up of a committee, that would include government and UHM representatives, to monitor and make recommendations to improve accessibility into Valletta.
- **11 April 2007** The Local Councils Association, the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Malta Environment and Planning Authority are

working to reduce the inconvenience caused by badly-used vacant sites within urban areas, Mepa said. As from Monday, Mepa will be receiving directions from local councils as to which sites will be issued an enforcement notice if not adequately walled off.

- **11 April 2007** The Privatisation Unit has issued a call for expressions of interest for the commercialisation of Enemalta's Petroleum Division. The call was issued on behalf of the government and Enemalta Corporation. The concession is for the management, operation, maintenance and development of Enemalta's Petroleum Division and the business activities undertaken by the Mediterranean Offshore Bunkering Company Limited. A spokesman for the Government Investments Ministry said that whereas in privatisation the assets are passed on to the successful bidder, in commercialisation they remain government property.
- **11 April 2007** Steps are being taken by the Department of Information to preserve a treasure trove of newsreels and other footage dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. DOI director Emanuel Abela said the films included the St Paul's centenary celebrations in 1960 and the Blessed Gorg Preca's funeral in July 1962.
- **11 April 2007** About 400 children packed St James Cavalier, in Valletta, for the environmental programme A Wander Through The Woods. The aim of the event was to help primary school children understand the importance of caring for trees and the environment.
- **11 April 2007** The National Orchestra is resuming its Concerto Series on Tuesday at 7.30 p.m. at the Manoel Theatre, in Valletta, with Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4 in G Major Op 58 featuring pianist Caroline Calleja. Under the direction of its music director Michael Laus, the National Orchestra will also perform Beethoven's The Ruins of Athens, Op. 113 (Overture) while the second half will be dedicated to Dvorak's Symphony No. 8 in G Major Op 88.
- **12 April 2007** The Maltese government has nominated Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Frendo as candidate for the post of Secretary General of the Commonwealth. A copy of a letter by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi to all Commonwealth heads of state and of government and to Commonwealth Secretary General Donald McKinnon announcing Malta's nomination was circulated to all Commonwealth High Commissions in London
- **12 April 2007** Maltese ambassadors and high commissioners resident abroad have been summoned for the third high level meeting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today and tomorrow. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, called the meeting to discuss with the permanent secretary, directors general, directors, ministry officials and diplomats, a number of "important" themes pertaining to the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **12 April 2007** Britain's Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, arrived in Malta on an official visit and was welcomed at Malta International Airport by Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and Home Affairs.
- **12 April 2007** A training programme, designed to give people basic communication technology skills, will be launched this summer using EU funds. IT Minister Austin Gatt said the programme - First Step - was mainly targeted at workers who risked losing their job and at the unemployed.
- **13 April 2007** Despite a difficult year, Malta International Airport shareholders would receive the same dividend as last year and the company posted the same results as in the record year 2004-2005.

- **13 April 2007** British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott described Foreign Minister Michael Frendo as a "very good" nominee for the Commonwealth's top job but would not comment on whether the UK government will be supporting his candidature. Dr Frendo's nomination for the post of Commonwealth Secretary General, which was announced on Wednesday, was among the topics discussed during Mr Prescott's brief stay in Malta.
- **13 April 2007** The contract for the construction and management of a residential home for the elderly in Mellieha was signed between the government and CareMalta Mellieha Ltd, marking the first public-private partnership scheme of its sort. The home will have 106 rooms, catering for 130 elderly, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly, Helen D'Amato, said. Work will start in the coming days. CareMalta was set up in 1992 to offer quality care to the elderly. It is the operator of Casa Arkati, in Mosta, Villa Messina, in Rabat, the government homes in Zejtun and Cospicua and Prince of Wales Apartments, in Sliema. The new home will provide services for independent, semi-independent and dependent elderly.
- **13 April 2007** The Malta Playing Fields Association is donating Lm1,000 worth of playing field equipment to the Nadur local council, being the first drawn recipient in a scheme just launched by the association. The Nadur council's name was drawn by lot at the MPFA headquarters in the presence of representatives from three local councils.
- **13 April 2007** The chapel of St Roque, situated in Main Street, Zebbug, has been reopened by Din l-Art Helwa, the national trust of Malta, after restoration work that took two years to complete. The work was possible thanks to financial support by Round Table One.
- **13 April 2007** The Maltese economy continued to show signs of a recovery last year, according to the Economic Bulletin - March 2007, just launched by Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. The bulletin takes into account data available up to March 9, 2007. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) registered an increase of 5.5 per cent in nominal terms and 2.9 per cent in real terms, mainly underpinned by increases in private consumption expenditure.
- **14 April 2007** The government has instructed all its entities and agencies - which include Air Malta, the Water Services Corporation and local councils - that any smoothing carried out to prices when Malta switches to euro must be in favour of the consumer, according to sources close to the Ministry of Finance.
- **14 April 2007** The government is in the process of revamping its oncology services by converting Zammit Clapp Hospital into a state-of-the-art centre for the treatment and supportive care of cancer patients, Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care Louis Deguara said.
- **14 April 2007** Spanish low-cost carrier *Clickair* will be starting twice-weekly services to Malta from Barcelona as from the first week of June.
- **14 April 2007** Over 400 vacancies at Mater Dei Hospital have been advertised in just over two months, a spokesman for the new hospital said. Calls to fill vacancies in the grades of staff nurses, senior house officers, deputy nursing officers, health assistants, pharmacists, physiotherapists, midwives, clerks and receptionists were made by the Health Division, the Health Ministry, the Foundation for Medical Services and others responsible for public service recruitment.
- **14 April 2007** Lufthansa Technik Malta will be investing €55 million in new maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for wide-body aircraft after signing

an agreement with the government. This expansion project aims to generate 550 jobs over five years and new training and development opportunities in aircraft maintenance.

- **14 April 2007** The Curia and Microsoft have reached a broad partnership agreement which encompasses a various areas, beyond the provision of technology to the Curia, its affiliates and Church schools. The company will assist the Curia and the Church to adopt new technologies.
- **14 April 2007** A joint research effort between Malta and Germany will look into the feasibility of developing a new waste-to-energy technology linking waste recycling directly to desalination plants.
- **15 April 2007** German Federal Minister Sigmar Gabriel toured several sites in Gozo as part of his two-day visit to Malta. Mr Gabriel, who is responsible for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, was shown round Dwejra Bay by Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono, Environment Minister George Pullicino, San Lawrenz mayor Noel Formosa and Nature Trust president Vince Attard. The German delegation were briefed on the Dwejra Life Project which aims to reverse the degradation process and conserve the site.
- **15 April 2007** More than 90 per cent of construction work, internal finishes and engineering systems at Mater Dei Hospital have been concluded, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said. The hospital's finished parts have been handed over to the Foundation for Medical Services (FMS) and the final work to install medical equipment and furniture is under way.
- **15 April 2007** Malta will be just a click away from some of Europe's top photographers who will be convening on the island for an unusual tourism branding campaign. Top photography brand Nikon has teamed up with the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) through Italian communications agency 'The Gate' to fly a photographer from each of the 26 other EU member states to shoot photos of Malta.
- **15 April 2007** The German Company JV Haase, which is responsible, with the Vassallo Group, for the rehabilitation of Malta's three closed landfills and a specialised project at the Sant Antnin Waste Recycling Plant, has been awarded a major waste treatment plant project by the City of Manchester. Haase has been awarded a contract to build three of five mechanical biological waste treatment plants with its consortium partner Clarke Energy and the British waste organisation GMWDA.
- **15 April 2007** People with disabilities are to receive training on how to recognise genuine euro coins and notes. The training courses, to be organised by the National Euro Changeover Committee (NECC), will allow people with visual and hearing impairments, and those with learning difficulties, to become familiar with the texture, weight and distinguishing features of the new currency. Malta is targeting January 1 for the adoption of the euro, and the go-ahead from the European Commission is expected by June.
- **16 April 2007** The government is committed to extend public transport into the night, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said. The lack of an adequate night service was identified by the minister as one of the shortcomings of the public transport system.
- **16 April 2007** A new edition of the Ecclesiastical Directory in both Maltese and English has just been published. The directory includes detailed information about the Curia, Church secretariats and commissions, parishes, religious orders, institutions, associations and movements, homes for the elderly and Church schools.

- **16 April 2007** Over 5,000 people thronged San Anton Palace, in Attard, jumping at the one-off chance to take a peek at the rich cultural heritage within its walls. The palatial residence was open to the public as part of the Office of the President's plan to raise funds for the Malta Community Chest Fund, while giving the public something in return.
- **17 April 2007** The government's experimental farm at Ghammieri is a hive of activity thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of a handful of young agricultural officers who, under the direction of their Principal Scientific Officers, are keen to carry out trials which will pave the way forward for the agricultural sector.
- **17 April 2007** New inflation statistics show that Malta has registered the lowest annual inflation rate in the EU for the third month in a row, bringing the island very close to securing its place in the eurozone. Figures issued by Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, show that Malta's monthly inflation rate in March stood at just 0.8 per cent. This means that its 12-month average rate, the criterion considered for euro entry, dropped to just 2.2 per cent.
- **17 April 2007** The Cabinet approved a memo by Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg on changing a provision in the Criminal Code that empowers the Attorney General to privately consult a judge to seek a person's re-arrest if acquitted during the compilation stage. Under the amendment, the procedure will have to take place in the open and the person involved will be able to contest his re-arrest. The change comes after the Constitutional Court last February declared that this provision, and the possibility of the continuation of the compilation of evidence and consequential indictment, were likely to breach a person's right to a fair hearing.
- **17 April 2007** The National Commission Persons with Disability inaugurated its Wenzu Dalli Resources Centre, which has been relocated to a fully accessible section of the *Centru Hidma Soċjali* in Sta Venera. The library contains information related to disabilities, which is useful to both persons with disability and those without, their families and those working and studying in the field, as well as the public.
- **17 April 2007** Final preparations are underway for the seaplane link between Grand Harbour and Mgarr to take off in a few weeks' time. Harbour Air Seaplanes, the Canadian company which is planning to run about 13 daily flights and scenic tours from Valletta Waterfront to Mgarr and back, has posted adverts in the media to recruit marketing managers, dock operations crew, reservation agents, flight operations personnel and trainee engineers before it operates its first flight "towards the end of May and the beginning of June".
- **17 April 2007** University students are promoting the concept of family-friendly measures in the workplace, inspired by a survey which shows that 44.8 per cent of inactive women are willing to work given the right conditions. The aim of their campaign is to encourage employers to introduce more family-friendly measures, such as the options of flexi-time and telework to address these women's needs.
- **17 April 2007** Parliament unanimously gave a second reading to a Bill to entrench the Office of the Ombudsman in the Constitution. The Bill also raises the retirement age of magistrates and the Attorney General to 65. The amendments need the support of two-thirds of the House in third reading to become law. In his winding up, Justice Minister Tonio Borg said in reaction to comments by the opposition that the Ombudsman would not be able to investigate the decisions of other constitutional bodies, such as the Employment Commission, the Broadcasting Authority or the Auditor General.

He would, however, be able to investigate cases involving the administration of those bodies, such as, for example, alleged discrimination in recruitment.

- **17 April 2007** The Central Bank expects the economy to grow by between 2.8 and 3.4 per cent this year, compared to 2.9 per cent recorded last year. The bank says in its annual report, tabled in Parliament, that while economic growth last year was largely driven by a rebound in exports, this year stronger private consumption and gross fixed capital formation are expected to be the main factors. Export growth is expected to be stronger but this may be offset to some extent by an acceleration in import growth.
- **17 April 2007** The rehabilitation and restoration of the Addolorata Cemetery is under study, since this will involve a long-term project requiring substantial funding, Health Minister Louis Deguara told Evarist Bartolo (MLP) in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **17 April 2007** The government has taken no decision to liberalise the sectors of white taxis, karrozzini, and red mini-buses, Transport Minister Jesmond Mugliett told Adrian Vassallo (MLP) in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **17 April 2007** The King Baudouin Foundation of Belgium is to sponsor the restoration of one of the tapestries conserved at St John's Co-Cathedral. Consisting of 29 pieces, the tapestry collection is the largest of its kind in the world and the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation is committed to restoring it. The tapestries are to be restored at the De Wit Laboratories in Belgium at an estimated cost of Lm429,300 (€1,000,000).
- **17 April 2007** The organisers of the Lyceum Bicycle Marathon are optimistic they have exceeded the target of Lm10,000 from their annual marathon to raise funds for the refurbishment of the main kitchen at Dar tal-Providenza in Siggiewi. The Association of Past Lyceum Students (ALPS) has contributed Lm1,700 to the marathon fund through a series of fund-raising events.
- **17 April 2007** Nationalist MEP Simon Busuttil has been appointed the European People's Party (EPP) parliamentary group's contact person for Tunisia. In this role, Dr Busuttil's task will be to promote EU-Tunisia relations with the largest group in the European Parliament.
- **17 April 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona has sent a congratulatory message to Pope Benedict XVI on his 80th birthday and on the second anniversary of his pontificate. Pope Benedict, who celebrated his birthday, will celebrate his second anniversary as Pope on Thursday. The Maltese Church will celebrate this second anniversary tomorrow with Mass concelebrated by Mgr Cremona and by Apostolic Nuncio Felix del Blanco Prieto at St John's Co-Cathedral, in Valletta, at 6.30 p.m.
- **18 April 2007** A Eurobarometer survey, which has shown Slovenia's relatively smooth transition to the euro, indicates that Malta's changeover could be even less of a headache. No less than 95 per cent of Slovenian citizens perceived the changeover to be successful and that the information campaigns were effective in preparing citizens for the euro last January. With Malta's preparations starting well in advance of E-day - January 1, 2008 - the transition should be even more effective, according to National Euro Changeover Committee media relations manager Melvyn Mangion.
- **18 April 2007** The EU German presidency, currently heading negotiations between EU member states over a new European Commission proposal on divorce, has come up with a solution that may fit the bill for Malta, which is the only EU member state where divorce is not allowed. The proposed regulation deals with which national law would be applicable in cases of divorce between EU citizens of different nationalities.

- **18 April 2007** The European Commission is not yet sure whether the changes introduced by the government last month on the engagement of civil servants on fixed-term contracts are in line with EU legislation.
- **18 April 2007** Malta has a high take-up of immunisation among children, and a leaflet published by the Health Division to mark European Immunisation Week aims to help keep it that way.
- **18 April 2007** A total of 27,350 Maltese went abroad in January and February, an increase of nine per cent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **19 April 2007** The prospectus for full time courses starting in October at the Institute for Tourism Studies was launched by Education Minister Louis Galea. Programmes of studies are being offered at foundation, certificate, diploma and higher diploma levels. On obtaining a higher diploma, students can continue reading tourism studies at the University of Malta to obtain a degree.
- **19 April 2007** There were 20,218 applications for visas from foreigners wishing to visit Malta between September 2006 and February 2007, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said. He told Labour MP Carmelo Abela in reply to a parliamentary question that 1,564 of the applications were refused. Most of the applications - 6,031, came from Libya followed by Russia - 5,281, Turkey - 1,394 and Serbia - 1,023.
- **19 April 2007** A total of 771,961 passengers used the Malta-Gozo ferries in the first quarter of this year, an increase of 15.1 per cent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said. The number of passenger vehicles carried increased by 14.5 per cent to 210,814. The ferries made a total of 4,523 trips between Malta and Gozo in the same period, a rise of 4.9 per cent. The Malita carried 332,691 passengers or 46.7 per cent of the total. The other two Gozo Channel ferries, the Ta' Pinu and the Gaudos, carried 207,087 and 172,184 passengers respectively.
- **19 April 2007** The new president of the Malta Institute of Professional Photography, Stephen Busuttil, carried away no fewer than four awards - three silver and a bronze - thanks to prints he submitted in the Orvieto Fotografia professional photography awards in Italy. He placed third overall. Mr Busuttil, a former photographer of The Times and The Sunday Times, was named International Overseas Photographer of the Year 2006 by the Society of Weddings and Portraits Photographers during the society's Convention in London last January.
- **20 April 2007** The "energy benefit" announced in the last budget, aimed at easing the burden of utility bills on eligible families, was launched by Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina. The new measure will benefit an estimated 30,000 households, up from 13,000 the government used to exempt from the surcharge on water and electricity after the surcharge was first introduced.
- **20 April 2007** Brussels is expected to give its final advice on whether Malta has met all the criteria to adopt the euro at a meeting of the College of EU Commissioners on May 16, Commission sources said.
- **20 April 2007** Innovation is one of Malta's weakest points, according to a global index of the World Economic Forum ranking countries according to their competitiveness. Malta ranks 19th in the index when compared to other EU member states. The Global Competitiveness Report 2006-2007 says Finland is the most competitive EU country of all.
- **21 April 2007** The European Union is stepping up efforts to tackle illegal immigration on its southern borders, including Malta, Italy and Spain, and is

planning six joint operations and four study projects this year with Frontex, allocating €8 for the operations.

- **21 April 2007** There are strong indications that 2007 will be a good year for investment, according to Investments Minister Austin Gatt, who revealed that 13 projects are in an advanced stage of consideration by Malta Enterprise. The forecast capital investment was Lm37,295,733 up from Lm29,473,600 in 2005 when 69 projects were approved. The projects approved last year were estimated to generate 2,585 new jobs.
- **21 April 2007** Arthur Dutton has been selected by the 2000 Art Foundation in the Netherlands to display an artwork of his in an exhibition marking Earth Day at The Water Museum in Arnhem, The Netherlands, tomorrow. The World Art Collection catalogue entitled 1001 Reasons To Love The Earth features an international collection of art works. Each artist submitted a message with a reason for loving the earth along with his artwork. Mr Dutton's message is "The body, spirit and soul of the earth and me are one."
- **21 April 2007** European Union justice ministers have "agreed to disagree" on a Commission proposal on divorce rules. Although the Maltese government had originally objected to the proposed regulation, due to its stand against divorce, it does not seem Malta was the cause of the deadlock. Instead, Sweden and other "liberal" member states were the most vociferous against the proposal because they wanted to maintain their liberal divorce systems intact.
- **21 April 2007** An animal welfare centre in Ta' Qali, for which the government has just filed a development application, will offer a safe haven to strays roaming the streets. The plans for the centre were drawn up by architects commissioned by the Environment Ministry, in consultation with the Veterinary Division, and a full application was submitted to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority.
- **21 April 2007** German low-cost airline Germanwings has decided to start flying to Malta all-year round, giving the island a potential major tourism boost from one of the most lucrative markets. The airline launched services to the island a mere three weeks ago, but the response has been so encouraging it opted to extend its services to the lean months as well.
- **22 April 2007** Over 70 people travelled from the UK to join their Maltese George Cross Island Association counterparts in the short, but poignant, ceremony to mark the 65th anniversary of the award of the George Cross to Malta. The ceremony is usually held on April 15, the day the George Cross was awarded in 1942, but as a result of administrative difficulties it had to be set back by a week.
- **22 April 2007** A two-day meeting in Malta this July of all 277 MEPs of the European People's Party and the European Democrats (EPP-ED) group is expected to focus on illegal immigration, with a view to presenting concrete proposals to the EU by the end of the year, group chairman Joseph Daul said.
- **22 April 2007** A series of public consultation meetings ahead of the 2008 Budget, organised by the Office of the Prime Minister, kicks off on Wednesday. Called Djalogi 2008, they will consist of a series of dialogue sessions aimed to provide the general public with an opportunity to contribute towards the formulation of the 2008 pre-budget document.
- **23 April 2007** The 14th edition of the Air Malta International Travel Exhibition (Amitex) will be held at the Trade Fair Grounds, Naxxar, between Thursday and April 29, with the participation of 34 local and 20 foreign exhibitors. The airline will promote its summer 2007 flight schedule, which will run until the end of October. Its latest additions are Liverpool, Venice and Benghazi and it has

increased frequencies to Munich, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Birmingham, Stansted and Rome.

- **23 April 2007** Children are becoming more avid readers despite a multitude of distractions like computers and short concentration spans, according to renowned British author Katherine Roberts who is in Malta on the occasion of World Book Day today. The author is visiting schools and talking to students about her Seven Fabulous Wonders series, published by HarperCollins. Each book is based on one of the Wonders and is a mix of history and magic.
- **23 April 2007** The House Social Affairs Committee has returned from Helsinki, which was its first visit abroad. The trip was an integral part of the committee's ongoing debate on the knowledge economy. The aim was for its members to find out about the experiences of a country which has been successful in this sector. The committee had meetings with former Finnish Prime Minister Esko Aho, now president of Sitra - the state organisation which promotes research, development and innovation. It also had a meeting with Tekes, a state institution that excels in the advanced technology sector.
- **23 April 2007** The Third World Group, a local non-profit and voluntary organisation, is raising money to be donated to Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity for their work with the emarginated in Naples, Italy. During the summer holidays, the group will be sending 10 volunteers to the home run by the sisters in Naples to perform work such as cleaning, painting and helping with the day-to-day tasks. In the following months the group will then be organising a number of car boot sales to raise money for this purpose.
- **23 April 2007** The *Moviment Kattoliku Studenti Universitarji* (MKSU) and the Malta Medical Students' Association (MMSA) held a blood drive and organ donation campaign on the university campus. The activity, which is held twice yearly, is meant to motivate students to become aware of the needs and realities in society and to make a difference. A number of students applied for organ-donor cards.
- **24 April 2007** The agreement on Smart City Malta, which is expected to be the biggest foreign investment the island has ever seen, was signed yesterday morning and a number of multinational companies are already showing "significant interest" in the project.
- **24 April 2007** Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, confirmed that substantial progress was made in Malta's public finances last year. After analysing the figures submitted by the government, Eurostat reported that the island had achieved remarkable progress in its efforts to put its finances on a sound footing.
- **24 April 2007** The general government deficit last year was estimated at Lm53.6 million, down from Lm61.8 million in 2005, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 April 2007** Malta has become a member of the Academy of European Law, a non-profit-making institution that helps in the teaching and spreading of information on European legislation.
- **24 April 2007** As from this month, Air Malta and Lufthansa will be strengthening their commercial partnership with the extension of the code-share agreement to the Malta-Bremen, Malta-Hanover and Malta-Dresden routes. With this new development, Malta will be connected to these German cities with a twice-daily service and via Frankfurt and Munich hubs.
- **24 April 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo stressed the importance of visa-free travel being extended to all EU citizens travelling to the US. Attending an EU General Affairs and External Relations Council in Luxembourg, Dr Frendo

said a commitment towards this objective should be made at the US-EU Summit to be held in Washington, on Monday.

- **24 April 2007** Chief Justice Vincent De Gaetano is in Moscow as a guest of the President of the Supreme Arbitration Court of the Russian Federation, Anton Ivanov. The Chief Justice is reciprocating a visit to Malta in March 2004 by the former president of this Court, Veniamin Yakovlev.
- **24 April 2007** Sales, investment, annual earnings per employee and annual turnover per employee in the manufacturing industry all rose last year, while employment in the sector decreased the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 April 2007** An estimated 130,000 individuals will not be required to file their income tax return and self-assessment form any longer, thanks to a new measure unveiled. Instead, they will be served directly with a tax statement based on the information available at the Inland Revenue Department. "We are making people's lives easier," the Parliamentary Secretary in the Finance Ministry, Tonio Fenech, told a news conference. The information available to the IRD ranges from income arising from employment to revenue from immovable property and that from local interest, which has not been charged the 15 per cent withholding tax.
- **25 April 2007** A total 811,385 books were loaned by libraries within the Department of Libraries last year, Education Minister Louis Galea said on the occasion of World Book Day on Monday. The minister said this was 26,000 books more than in 2005. Figures showed that there was also an increase in the number of persons who went to the library to seek reference material for their projects, including books they were compiling.
- **25 April 2007** Just under 13 per cent of tourists who visited Malta last year came for its culture and heritage, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said. That amounts to 143,460 tourists. Dr Zammit Dimech said that up to some years ago Malta depended exclusively on the sun, sand and sea for its tourism industry, but the creation of more tourist destinations, especially in North Africa, had pushed it to diversify through the identification of niche markets. Malta was able to offer tourists 7,000 years of history and nine world heritage sites.
- **25 April 2007** Occupancy rates went up by 5.2 percentage points in February when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The figures show that a total of 399,351 nights were spent in hotels and other forms of accommodation around the island. The NSO said the average length of stay has increased by 0.4 nights over February 2006, with the average being 6.1 nights. There are 36,966 beds in establishments around Malta and 1,631 in Gozo and Comino.
- **25 April 2007** International bookmakers are forecasting that Malta should make it to the final of the Eurovision Song Contest in Finland next month, but, with two weeks to go the race is wide open. William Hill are placing Olivia Lewis's song Vertigo in joint sixth place, offering punters odds of 16:1, placing Switzerland in first place with odds of 7:2. Though sixth is encouraging, Malta has the same odds as five other contestants - Turkey, Slovenia, Latvia, Israel and Denmark.
- **25 April 2007** Action has been taken against five timeshare promoters this year, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said in Parliament. These promoters, also known as OPCs, were fined a total of Lm2,200.
- **25 April 2007** The Maltese balcony is the theme of a set of stamps and a miniature sheet designed by Alfred Caruana Ruggier, to be issued by Maltapost's Philatelic Bureau of plc, on Saturday. Maltese balconies are

believed to be the first open balconies built entirely from stone and which know their origin to mediaeval times.

- **25 April 2007** The European Union will team up with this year's Eurovision Song Contest to promote its message against discrimination on the occasion of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, said that for the first time in 20 years, an official EU initiative will be associated with the international music competition, connecting Europeans from all around the continent. During the Eurovision week, taking place in the centre of Helsinki between May 5 and 12, the European Year campaign will promote its messages from a pavilion at the Eurovision village and will pass its message to 2,000 journalists.
- **26 April 2007** The European Parliament, meeting during its plenary session in Strasbourg, approved a regulation providing for special rapid response teams to be set up to provide technical and operational assistance should there be any major influxes of illegal immigrants over the external borders of any EU member state.
- **26 April 2007** The jobless figure for March stood at 7,033, a decline of 660 persons when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 April 2007** The new Tripoli office of the Libyan-Maltese Chamber of Commerce was inaugurated on Tuesday by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo.
- **26 April 2007** Sonny Portelli was officially named chairman of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, an appointment for which there was unanimous support from the social partners. The previous chairman, Victor Scicluna, stepped down last February, at the end of his tether after attempts to find a way to keep the MCESD on track since he had replaced Edward Scicluna in September 2003.
- **27 April 2007** Europe's largest low-fare airline Ryanair announced it would be linking Malta with the all-important German route. The new link between Malta and Bremen will operate three times weekly from September 25, Ryanair's Sales Manager for Southern Europe, Bridget Dowling, said. The new route will carry an additional 40,000 passengers to and from Malta every year and create an additional 40 jobs, according to Ms Dowling.
- **27 April 2007** The jobless figure for March stood at 7,033, a decline of 660 persons when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The most sought after occupations for men in March related to elementary duties, services and trades, while women tended to seek jobs which were clerical or service-oriented. The unemployment rate for last November stood at five per cent. The long-term unemployment rate, referring to people who have been registering for work for more than 12 months, stood at 1.8 per cent that month. The unemployment rate among older workers (45 and over) was 3.9 per cent while the unemployment rate among young people (under 25) stood at 7.6 per cent.
- **27 April 2007** MEPs on Wednesday voted in favour of setting up a new temporary committee on climate change. The committee will have 60 members, still to be appointed, and a mandate of one year. The committee's main objective will be to formulate proposals on the European Union's future integrated policy on climate change and to coordinate the European Parliament's position with a view to negotiating the international framework for climate policy after 2012, better known as the Kyoto Protocol.
- **27 April 2007** The new Tripoli office of the Libyan-Maltese Chamber of Commerce was inaugurated on Tuesday by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo.

The office is intended as a point of reference and a "one stop shop" for Libyans and Maltese who wish to use the Chamber's knowledge of the Maltese and Libyan markets to do business in Libya. It will also offer assistance to Libyans who wish to explore the potential for investment in Malta or of Malta as a stepping stone to Europe.

- **27 April 2007** The restored pipe organ at the Rotunda in Mosta, has just been inaugurated. The historical instrument is the island's largest pipe organ. Installed in 1885 and made by the firm Pacifico Inzoli of Crema in Italy, the organ cost £900, not a sum to sniff at in those days. But with the passage of time and lack of proper maintenance, the mechanical parts fell into disrepair and the organ was in dire need of restoration.
- **28 April 2007** Two express buses to Valletta will start operating in the morning and afternoon rush hours from Mosta and Zurrieq, as of Wednesday. Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett told a press conference at the Malta Transport Authority (ADT) offices, that the new routes, which would take considerably less time to reach Valletta than the normal routes, would cater for commuters who have until today travelled to the capital for work with their cars.
- **28 April 2007** *Dawra Durella Madwar Hmdina*, a fund-raising and awareness campaign in aid of the Equal Partners Foundation, was inaugurated by Archbishop Paul Cremona. The Equal Partners Foundation provides children with personalised therapy programmes and support in homes, schools, work and within the community at large.
- **29 April 2007** The effort that should be made to remember those who sacrificed their lives so that we may enjoy the freedom we have today was highlighted the President of Malta and others during a presentation at the Maritime Museum. Members of the Neptune association, a British charity formed in 2002 to establish and maintain a permanent memorial to the 837 who lost their lives in the sinking of HMS Neptune and HMS Kandahar, presented a scroll of honour to the Maritime Museum while President Eddie Fenech Adami unveiled a memorial.
- **29 April 2007** The Hal Far Appogg Open Centre, currently hosting 160 asylum seekers, recently embellished with the help of European Union funds, was opened to the public and the media. The asylum seekers welcomed visitors with traditional ethnic food from their countries of origin and showing them round the newly-refurbished flatlets for families.
- **29 April 2007** Government has issued a tender for the replacement of its current computer equipment used by the public service and public schools. The move, the first of its kind, was announced by the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology. In practice, the tender, which expires on June 6, means that the private sector would be providing on a five-year lease arrangement all personal computer equipment required for the administration and the education system and its maintenance. By grouping its computer requirements in one bundle, the ministry said that the new lease system will allow the government to purchase the latest technology while cutting down on costs for maintaining similar and compatible technology throughout its branches.
- **29 April 2007** The 22nd Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training meeting, or Malta Seminar, as it has become known, was opened on Friday at the Westin Dragonara Resort by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo, who highlighted the numerous issues that need to be addressed so that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is strengthened in future.
- **29 April 2007** Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Francis Agius was in Berlin recently, with representatives of Agricultural Co-operative Ltd, for the launch

of potato exports to the Jansen-Dongen company *Edika* for this year. In a statement Dr Agius noted with satisfaction that although Maltese growers exported potatoes to the strong Dutch market, they had succeeded to tap the German market for the third consecutive year. He said that with Malta's accession to the EU, export quotas were lifted and new export openings had arisen. Dr Agius said that over 5,000 tons of potatoes were exported in the past year.

- **29 April 2007** The Maltese perception that driving in Malta is sometimes shoddy was scientifically proven incorrect when the European Commission unveiled its first 'road safety scoreboard'. According to the study, Malta last year had the safest roads in all the European Union and has managed to reduce its number of fatal road accidents by 38 per cent over the five-year period starting in 2001, when the EU's road safety action plan was introduced.
- **29 April 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Parliamentary Secretary for Finance Tonio Fenech visited the offices of Northway Financial Corporation Ltd in Sliema last week. They were welcomed by the chairman of the company, Peter Ash, who is also CEO of NDG, Northway's parent company, and Paul Ash, its Chief Operating Officer. Northway has been operating an office in Malta since 2005 and currently employs 90 people. Peter Ash said that future plans include doubling the employee base. Being a financial institution licensed by the Malta Financial Services Authority, Northway is an online cash advance company and offers small loans to its clients in the US and UK. It plans to open up business in Australia and New Zealand in July.
- **30 April 2007** Jonathan Dalli, former general secretary of the National Youth Council (KNZ), has been elected member of the European Union Affairs Commission of the European Youth Forum, which is based in Brussels.
- **30 April 2007** An overwhelming 71 per cent of parents were unaware of the benefits of quality childcare, according to new research carried out by the Employment and Training Corporation.
- **30 April 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first quarter of this year amounted to Lm55.6 million, a drop of Lm4.9 million, or 8.1 per cent, from a shortfall of Lm60.6 million in the first quarter of last year, the National Statistics Office.

May

- **1 May 2007** The new hospital is expected to be fully operational within three to four months of its inauguration on July 1, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said. Contractor Skanska will deliver the multi-million Mater Dei Hospital and a carefully phased migration will start at once.
- **1 May 2007** Tourism in March was up by an estimated 10.8 per cent over the same month last year and tourist expenditure rose by 12.8 per cent, the National Statistics Office said. An estimated 71,281 tourists visited Malta in March, with the increase deriving mainly from the Italian, French and British markets. Minor drops were registered in the Belgian, Austrian and American markets.
- **1 May 2007** A new 15-volume set of books entitled *Kullana Għat-Tfal*, aimed at pupils aged between nine and 11, has been launched by *Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza*. The set, edited by Charles Briffa and Michael Schiavone, gives

an insight into the social values of Maltese society. One book will be issued quarterly.

- **2 May 2007** Most motorists entering Valletta will, from today, have to pay to park for more than half a hour. A spokesman for the Investments and IT Ministry said that from today, the only reserved parking spot inside the city is in front of St John's Co-Cathedral, for use by the Archbishop.
- **2 May 2007** With an average of six-and-a-half hours of bright sunshine a day, April was the third cloudiest April on record, and one of the driest. Malta International Airport's Meteorological Office said April 1966 and April 1982 were cloudier.
- **2 May 2007** The government will be working hard to cut down, by the end of the year, the number of infringement procedures opened by the European Commission, the Prime Minister said. Dr Gonzi was speaking on the third anniversary of EU membership in an interview on the EU magazine programme Tiegħa fuq l-Ewropa, produced by Allied Newspapers and broadcast on TVM.
- **2 May 2007** The European Institute of Education (EIE) has donated a number of management books to the St Paul's Bay local council as part of the institute's "knowledge for all" campaign.
- **3 May 2007** Valletta's streets were quieter than usual yesterday as fewer vehicles entered the city on the first day of the pay-to-park scheme. The number of cars entering and leaving Valletta between 7 and 9 a.m. dropped by 14 per cent (around 400) compared with last Monday, the eve of the scheme's introduction, according to the company operating the Controlled Vehicular Access scheme.
- **3 May 2007** The Electoral Commission announced that a revised electoral register for general and local council elections, as well as the European Union electoral register, has been published in the Government Gazette of April 30.
- **3 May 2007** Malta achieved the last requirement for euro adoption yesterday after having maintained exchange rate stability with the euro for two years within the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II).
- **3 May 2007** Education Minister Louis Galea re-launched the government scholarship scheme allocating Lm200,000 (€465,874) for students wishing to conduct Masters and doctoral-level research in Malta or abroad as from October.
- **3 May 2007** The youngest women to give birth in Malta between 2005 and this year were aged 13, Health Minister Louis Deguara said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **3 May 2007** A total of 1,439 persons have been arraigned since regulations to ban smoking in public places were introduced in 2004, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **3 May 2007** TVM and One Radio captured the highest audience shares in their respective mediums between January and March, according to the Broadcasting Authority's latest radio and television audience assessment report.
- **3 May 2007** A set of two stamps in this year's Europa issue, commemorating the centenary year of the Scout Movement, will be issued by the Philatelic Bureau of Maltapost plc.
- **4 May 2007** Unesco, the United Nations organisation responsible for culture, has no plan to revoke Valletta's status as a world heritage site, the organisation's World Heritage Centre chief for Europe and North America said.

- **4 May 2007** Mount Carmel Fireworks Factory of Zurrieq was declared overall winner of the Malta International Fireworks Festival held over the weekend.
- **4 May 2007** Malta and Cyprus last year topped the list of EU countries in terms of the number of asylum applications they receive per capita of their populations. Malta received over 1,200 asylum applications in 2006, equivalent to 3.1 per 1,000 residents, surpassed only by Cyprus which received 5.3 applications per 1,000 inhabitants.
- **4 May 2007** Seven people have in the past five years requested that the gender on their ID Card be changed - from male to female, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in Parliament. Minister Tonio Borg was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **4 May 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi opened Satariano Ltd's new showrooms in Valley Road, Birkirkara. Dr Gonzi praised Satariano's entrepreneurial spirit, which led to its success throughout a long number of years.
- **4 May 2007** A call for tenders to create an alliance of technology providers to work on e-government services is to be issued this month, Government Investments Minister Austin Gatt said on Wednesday. Speaking during a visit to Malta Information Technology and Training Services (Mitts) employees, the minister said this would greatly change the administration of government technology.
- **4 May 2007** As in the previous two years since EU membership, last year the Maltese maintained their lead in filing complaints to the EU ombudsman. According to the 2006 report released yesterday in Brussels by the EU ombudsman Nikiforos Diamandouros, on a per capita basis, the Maltese stood second out of the 27 member states in the 'complaints ranking,' surpassed by Luxembourg.
- **5 May 2007** In a move indicative of the success it has been having on the Malta route, Emirates' flights from Dubai, via Cyprus, are now being operated by a Boeing 777-200 aircraft that can carry 346 passengers and 18 tonnes of cargo.
- **5 May 2007** The University of Malta yesterday conferred the degree of Doctor of Literature (honoris causa) on Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaube. Dr Moratinos was honoured for his contribution to peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean region, his efforts to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean relations and his work in promoting peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **6 May 2007** Kevin Gafà, a nurse in the Mixed Admission Ward, has been awarded Worker of the Year 2006 of Mount Carmel Hospital.
- **6 May 2007** Malta has placed within the top 25 in the Economist Intelligence Unit's report on e-readiness, outpacing 14 other EU member states. Placing ahead of countries like Italy, Estonia and Spain, Malta obtained a score of 7.56 out of a maximum 10 to place 24th in the chart dominated by Denmark, the US and Sweden.
- **7 May 2007** Malta and Tonga have established diplomatic relations, the government said. An agreement was signed in New York by the Prime Minister of Tonga, Feleti Vaka'uta Sevele and Malta's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Victor Camilleri.
- **7 May 2007** A constant stream of people filed past the remains of Blessed Dun Gorg at the headquarters of the Christian doctrine society - MUSEUM - in Blata I-Bajda.

- **7 May 2007** Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos and Maltese Foreign Minister Michael Frendo discussed bilateral relations and the so-called Malta Initiative when the Spanish Foreign Minister called at the Malta Foreign Ministry.
- **7 May 2007** The embassy of the Netherlands will sponsor BirdLife Malta's scientific research work on bird migration over the Maltese islands, the NGO said. The announcement coincided with a visit by Dutch Ambassador Jan Heidsma to the Ghadira nature reserve which is managed by BirdLife.
- **7 May 2007** Children from 27 football nurseries participated in a non-competitive football tournament at the Luxol Grounds, in Pembroke, as part of Europe Day celebrations.
- **8 May 2007** Nicolas Sarkozy, the winner of Sunday's French presidential election, arrived in Malta yesterday on a private jet accompanied by members of his family and a number of security personnel.
- **8 May 2007** The European Commission yesterday confirmed that Malta's economy was gaining ground and forecast an economic revival by the end of 2008.
- **8 May 2007** A total of 6,110 MRI scans and 14,503 CT scans were carried out at St Luke's Hospital last year, Health Minister Louis Deguara said. Minister Deguara was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 May 2007** A total of 22 persons have so far served community service. Justice Minister Tonio Borg said two had been convicted of fraud, four were found guilty of drug offences (but were no longer abusers) and 16 were found guilty of theft. Minister Tonio Borg was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 May 2007** Eight persons died of a drug overdose last year and nine in 2005, Health Minister Louis Deguara said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 May 2007** The Benefit Fraud Unit within the Ministry of Social Solidarity last year conducted 928 investigations and recommended a withholding of social benefits in 712 cases, the minister, Dolores Cristina, told Parliament, while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 May 2007** Seventeen graduates are to benefit from foreign internships that IBM will be offering as part of the Vertical Strategic Alliance that the government entered into with IBM last year. Details on the internships were given by IT Minister Austin Gatt during a press conference with IBM's business development executive.
- **9 May 2007** French President-elect Nicolas Sarkozy yesterday swam in the clear blue sea off Mgarr ix-Xini, in Gozo, and later spent some time jogging in Delimara. Blue skies and an enchanting landscape formed a perfect backdrop as the light wind gently rocked the super yacht Mr Sarkozy has been on since his arrival on Monday afternoon, less than 24 hours since beating Segolene Royal in the French presidential election.
- **9 May 2007** Maltese soldiers are expected to participate in the FRONTEX-led border control operations in the Aegean Sea, shortly. This was announced by the Parliamentary Secretary, Tony Abela, while addressing about 30 AFM Bandsmen who were flying out to Brussels to take part in the Tattoo Militaire International 2007, to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome today.
- **9 May 2007** The cost of the first phase of restoration being carried out on St Barbara Bastion, in Valletta, amounts to about Lm100,000 (€232937), mainly to cover the wages of workers assigned to do the work over a number of months, Resources Minister Ninu Zammit said yesterday while visiting the works.

- **10 May 2007** About 3,000 pine saplings were destroyed on Tuesday night when an entire area beneath the Red Tower, in Mellieha, known as Foresta 2000, was systematically wiped out by vandals.
- **10 May 2007** A Children's European Parliament was held at the House of Representatives on the occasion of Europe Day on the theme If I Were A European Commissioner. Twelve "commissioners of the future" from various schools spoke during the event. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Anton Tabone, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo, Environment Minister George Pullicino, MPs, MEPs, the head of the European Commission Representation Office and the head of the European Parliament Office addressed the students.
- **10 May 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo has urged the successful conclusion of negotiations on a free trade agreement between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council. He said such a deal would signify "a new plateau in our relations and would be illustrative of a higher and deeper level of engagement between the European and Arab world.
- **10 May 2007** The National Statistics Office said that 14.9 per cent of all persons living in households fell under the poverty line in 2005. This means there were 59,315 persons in such a situation.
- **10 May 2007** No reports of sexual abuse at the workplace were made in the first four months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in answer to a parliamentary question.
- **10 May 2007** Camilleri Wines' Laurenti Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon 2003 was awarded the media prize during the second edition of the international competition Emozioni dal Mondo - Merlot e Cabernet Insieme.
- **10 May 2007** The European Union will survive the next 50 years because it has the ability to overcome various challenges. This was the optimistic message Foreign Minister Michael Frendo gave to a packed audience who attended the first Europe Day Seminar organised by his ministry on Can The EU Survive Another 50 Years?
- **10 May 2007** The importance of health services in the community was one of the salient topics at the third public dialogue held by the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi stressed on the subject, saying the government would be looking into it in the broad sense of the word during the drawing up of the pre-budget document - the aim behind this series of meetings with the public.
- **10 May 2007** Anton Tabone has been elected president of the American Chamber of Commerce, Malta (AmCham Malta) succeeding Mark Miceli Farrugia, who has been appointed Malta's Ambassador to the US.
- **11 May 2007** The NECC has launched the first in a series of monthly newspapers that will be delivered to every household. *L-ewro fuq l-ghatba* (the euro on the doorstep) is in Maltese and forms part of the information and communications campaign aimed at informing the public about the practical details of the changeover to the euro, which is expected to take place on January 1.
- **11 May 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami yesterday received letters of credence from Sabas Peetelt de la Vega, Ambassador of Columbia, and Zaal Gogsadze, Ambassador of Georgia. The ceremony took place at the Palace, Valletta.
- **11 May 2007** Air Malta is expecting to bring over 25,000 additional tourists to Malta with its newly introduced flights to Liverpool and Venice. Air Malta's twice weekly flight to Liverpool and Venice started operating on May 4.

- **12 May 2007** The government's decision on Thursday to abruptly close the spring hunting season has gone down well in Brussels. The European Commission yesterday said it supports the government's tough stand but reiterated its position that spring hunting should not be allowed because it goes against EU law.
- **12 May 2007** An evaluation of social benefit schemes is underway to determine whether there is need for change, the director general of the Department of Social Security said yesterday. Joe Camilleri said that although no specific changes have yet been identified, the department had singled out the schemes to be looked into.
- **12 May 2007** TV and radio stations are to resume their reporting of Maltese football matches after they reached an agreement with the Malta Football Association, the Broadcasting Authority said.
- **12 May 2007** During the first quarter of this year 1,032 persons had an accident at work, an increase of 3.3 per cent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 May 2007** The government has decided not to go ahead with the planned golf course at Ix-Xaghra I-Hamra and will instead build a nature and history park which will be five times the size of Valletta, the Prime Minister announced.
- **13 May 2007** The European Commission executive on Wednesday will recommend that Malta is fit to join the Eurozone as from January 1, 2008. The official announcement is to be made by Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joaquim Almunia at a press conference in Brussels after a meeting of the Commissioners.
- **13 May 2007** An estimated 65,966 foreigners visited Malta last year to learn English, seven per cent up from 2005, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said. This segment is totally run by private enterprise since all English language schools are privately-owned and offer not only work for full-time and part-time teachers but are also a source of revenue to host families.
- **14 May 2007** Close to 1,500 calls were received on the euro helpline 154 last month, bringing the total calls to 6,288 since January. A National Euro Changeover Committee spokesman said 10 per cent of the callers wanted to know more about the exchange rate.
- **15 May 2007** Some 5,000 pilgrims have registered to attend the canonisation of Blessed Dun Gorg Preca at the Vatican in just under three weeks' time, the Archbishop's Curia said.
- **15 May 2007** The number of Maltese passengers leaving the island by air and sea between January and March amounted to 46,683, an increase of 10.6 per cent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said. Almost 86 per cent of the total went to EU destinations, the most visited countries being the UK and Italy.
- **15 May 2007** Health centres of Floriana, Qormi, Gzira, Paola, Cospicua, Mosta and Rabat last year distributed 225,668 syringes to drug addicts, Health Minister Louis Deguara said while replying to a parliamentary question. The Minister said that 68,600 were distributed from the Paola centre, 45,610 from Gzira, 41,113 from Floriana, 28,700 from Cospicua, 22,339 from Mosta, 12,956 from Qormi and 6,350 from Rabat.
- **15 May 2007** A total of 194 perinatal deaths, including 105 stillbirths, were registered between 2000 and last year, Health Minister Louis Deguara said. Replying to a parliamentary question the Minister said in this period there were also 147 infant deaths - babies who died before reaching their first birthday, including 118 neonatal deaths - those dying before the age of one month.

- **15 May 2007** SMS reports of polluting vehicles between January and April this year numbered 13,309, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **15 May 2007** Local wardens carried out 4,786 vehicle emission tests between June last year and April this year with equipment loaned to them by the Public Transport Authority, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg yesterday said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **15 May 2007** Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, presented Lm30,000 (€69881) on behalf of the National Lotteries Good Causes Fund to Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna as assistance towards the ongoing restoration of Fort Rinella, in Kalkara.
- **15 May 2007** More than 5,000 persons have registered for the new Microsoft software that includes the Windows Vista Ultimate Upgrade and Office 2007 Enterprise that will be available at the end of this month, IT Minister Austin Gatt said.
- **16 May 2007** Mobile phone owners using their phones abroad this summer should start paying lower tariffs following a deal reached in Brussels on establishing new price caps. Following negotiations over the past few days, representatives of the European Parliament and member states have agreed that it should cost a maximum of €0.49 (21 cents) per minute to call home from another EU country and €0.24 (10 cents) per minute to receive a call - with both caps due to be lower in year two and year three.
- **16 May 2007** Ghadira Bay, one of the largest sandy beaches in Malta, will from next month have two lifeguard stations manned by qualified personnel, the Malta Tourism Authority said. The two towers will be located on the east and west sides of the bay.
- **16 May 2007** Two abandoned babies have been found in public places since April 1997, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said, while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **16 May 2007** European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joaquin Almunia will today make the official announcement that Malta has met the criteria to be accepted into the eurozone and adopt the euro currency as from January 1, 2008. The announcement will be made during a press conference in Brussels scheduled for 1.30 p.m. after the approval given by the College of Commissioners meeting earlier in the day.
- **16 May 2007** The number of births outside marriage has increased steadily from 0.7 per cent in 1960 to 20.2 per cent in 2005. This was one of the figures given by the National Office of Statistics in a statement issued on the occasion of the international day of families.
- **16 May 2007** An open week at the Delimara Power Station for students will take place between Monday and May 25. The station will be open to the public on May 27. As part of the ongoing activities to commemorate its 30th anniversary, Enemalta Corporation held a tree-planting ceremony last week where 30 trees were planted at Salini Park.
- **16 May 2007** In view of the National Referendum in Romania being held on Saturday, the Romanian government is organising a voting section for Romanian citizens in Malta.
- **17 May 2007** Maltese citizens will ditch the lira and use the euro instead as from the beginning of next year after the College of European Commissioners gave the green light for Malta to join the eurozone. A technical convergence report, issued by the Commission, states that "Malta has achieved a high

degree of sustainable economic convergence with the euro area member states" and "fulfils the necessary conditions to adopt the euro".

- **17 May 2007** The Spanish Foreign Ministry has formally informed the Maltese Foreign Ministry that Malta has been taken off the Spanish list of tax havens with effect from September 16, the date when the double taxation agreement between Malta and Spain came into effect.
- **17 May 2007** European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Commissioner Joe Borg has launched a consultation exercise on opportunities for the development of aquaculture in the EU. The steady growth in the demand for fish products represents great potential for further development in the production of such produce from aquaculture.
- **17 May 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami has sent a letter of congratulations to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who took office yesterday. Dr Fenech Adami said everyone had been "elated" when Mr Sarkozy chose Malta for his first holiday outside France after his election victory.
- **17 May 2007** This year's IT Student Placement Programme was launched by IT Minister Austin Gatt. Certificates to the participants who took part in last year's initiative were presented. Over 150 students following full-time ICT-related courses at the university and at MCAST, were assigned a temporary ICT job placement during their summer recess.
- **18 May 2007** Former Environment Parliamentary Secretary Stanley Zammit has been appointed chairman of the board responsible for implementing and managing the extensive national park in the area of Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra, the Prime Minister announced.
- **18 May 2007** The number of cruise passengers in April stood at 37,787, an increase of 605 over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said. Embarkations from and landings in Malta in April stood at 575 and 559 persons, respectively.
- **18 May 2007** The President's Office is for the third consecutive year inviting Maltese families to visit Verdala Palace in Buskett. The invitation is for June 17 at 10 a.m. A limited number of tickets - 150 - issued by Heritage Malta are available from the Museum of Fine Arts, South Street, Valletta daily between 9 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. until June 15.
- **19 May 2007** Expenditure on social security benefits increased by 5.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year due to higher outlays on pensions in respect of retirement, the National Statistics Office said. It said total expenditure on social security benefits for the first quarter of 2007 rose by Lm3.5 million (€8.15 million) compared to the same quarter of 2006 and amounted to Lm62.7 million. (€146 million).
- **19 May 2007** Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech launched a blue flag status pilot project for St George's Bay, in St Julians. The blue flag programme is a voluntary certification scheme for beaches and marinas that brings together the tourism and environmental sectors. St George's Bay is the first beach the Malta Tourism Authority has awarded blue flag status and will be managed in accordance with stringent criteria with regard to water quality, cleanliness, safety and management, provision of information and environmental education.
- **20 May 2007** Traffic between Malta and Gozo practically doubled this weekend as many crossed over to join in the festive spirit of Lejliet Lapsi Notte Gozitana. Between Friday and noon yesterday, the number of vehicles which boarded the ferry from Cirkewwa stood at 3,064, with 12,147 passengers.

- **20 May 2007** - Malta's vibrant culture, rich heritage and traditional gastronomy have been splashed across this month's Italian edition of Condé Nast Traveller magazine. This prestigious monthly publication, the leading magazine in the travel industry, has dedicated all its 225 pages to discovering Malta's hidden assets and Gozo's treasures.
- **20 May 2007** The Police, Armed Forces of Malta and Customs Department yesterday signed an agreement setting guidelines on the exchange of information between them. The agreement strengthens co-operation between the law enforcement organisations and addresses both co-operation in criminal cases and the collection of necessary information.
- **20 May 2007** Primary and secondary students of College II, the former Cottonera College, will be gathering for a 'Science Meets History' activity in Vittoriosa. Every day until Friday, seven groups of 30 schoolchildren will be accompanied by their teachers and science peripatetic teachers from the Curriculum Department to seven historical places where they will take part in hands-on activities related to the location.
- **21 May 2007** A group of 20 artists got together on Saturday to paint the area designated as Malta's first nature and history park. Their works will be exhibited at the end of June in an event organised by Din l-Art Helwa. The park stretches from Anchor Bay to Golden Bay in the north-west of the island and includes the area of Xaghra l-Hamra.
- **21 May 2007** The Union Haddiema Magħqudin and the government have signed an agreement governing work conditions of paramedics and health inspectors. The union said the agreement would allow promotion opportunities for paramedic and health inspector senior principals.
- **21 May 2007** The President and Mrs Fenech Adami paid an official visit to Gharghur. Dr Fenech Adami, who was shown round the village by mayor Mario Gauci, visited bee keeper Bertu Sant and Joe Zarb who dedicates most of his time to restoring decorations for the annual feast.
- **22 May 2007** HSBC is to double the number of employees at its Lm3 million (€7 million) global call centre in Swatar, investing a further Lm2.3 million (€5.5 million) only six months after the centre first opened.
- **22 May 2007** Around 35 per cent of the work required on Manwel Dimech bridge has been concluded but the Transport Authority has accepted a request from the contractor for a one-month extension of the project timetable, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said. The project is, therefore, due to be completed by November 10.
- **22 May 2007** The health department is preparing plans to use Karin Grech Hospital as a temporary rehabilitation hospital, the Prime Minister said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **22 May 2007** Sedqa, the national agency against drug and alcohol abuse, has invested Lm10,000 in the training of its staff in the first four months of the year. More than 2,500 hours of training were carried out between January and April as part of the agency's bid to upgrade the professional standards of local personnel, Foundation for Social Welfare Services chief executive Joe Gerada said.
- **22 May 2007** Just under 3,000 businesses have been awarded FAIR certificates after committing themselves to display correct pricing in both Maltese lira and euro, the National Euro Changeover Committee said.
- **22 May 2007** Subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased in the last quarter, the National Statistics Office said. The number of mobile telephone subscriptions reached 344,205, which roughly translates to

85.8 per cent of the population. The internet subscription index rose by 0.8 per cent to 287.3 from 284.9 at the end of March, last year. The cable and digital subscriptions index increased by 12.9 per cent compared to the same period, reaching 28.7 per 100 of the population.

- **23 May 2007** A committee headed by the Health Ministry will be set up within the next few days assigned with the tough task of reducing the obesity levels in Malta by 15 per cent in five years. A recent report by the World Health Organisation shows that 41.6 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women aged 20 to 64 are overweight, while another 26.6 per cent of men and 20.4 per cent of women are obese.
- **23 May 2007** Social benefits to single mothers last year, amounted to nearly Lm2.8 million (€6.52 million) , Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. Replying to a parliamentary question, the Minister said the benefits - given to 2,043 single mothers, included social assistance, maternity benefits, children's allowance, disabled child allowance, milk grant and the additional bonus
- **23 May 2007** People with a disability will be the first to benefit from a government decision to give refurbished computers to disadvantaged families. As the government embarks on a Lm7 (€16) million project to change all its computers within the next 18 months by leasing new ones, a spokesman for the IT Ministry explained that the existing computers will be given to underprivileged communities at the cost of refurbishment.
- **23 May 2007** The number of licensed motor vehicles at the end of the first quarter this year stood at 280,242, up by 1,821 from the 278,421 registered in the quarter ending last December, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 76.1 per cent were private vehicles, while commercial vehicles made up 16.4 per cent. New licences issued during the first quarter of this year amounted to 3,123.
- **24 May 2007** The EU's 150 million mobile phone users came a step closer to cheaper calls from abroad, after the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to approve a deal reached between the Parliament and representatives of member states, last week.
- **24 May 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona has accepted an invitation by Malta's High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, Michael Refalo, to visit London on June 9, where he will celebrate a thanksgiving Mass at Westminster Cathedral to mark the canonisation of the Blessed Dun Gorg Preca.
- **24 May 2007** Over 40 per cent of Maltese citizens feel the laws banning smoking in public places are not being respected, a Eurobarometer study on tobacco has revealed. Malta is one of the countries where smoking bans in all public places have been introduced, together with Ireland, Sweden and Italy.
- **24 May 2007** Over 63,000 passengers and 15,000 vehicles crossed the channel between May 16 and last Sunday - when Lejlet Lapsi - Notte Gozitana was held - proving to the organisers that the event was "a huge success right through".
- **25 May 2007** Two new ambassadors yesterday officially assumed office when they presented their letters of credence to President Eddie Fenech Adami. They are José Roberto Andino-Salazar, Ambassador of El Salvador, and Papa Cheikh Saadibou Fall, Ambassador of Senegal. The ceremonies took place at the Palace, in Valletta.
- **25 May 2007** The seaplane, which will service a link between Grand Harbour and Mgarr, arrived in Malta. The aircraft is operated by Harbour Air Seaplanes, the Canadian company which is planning to run about 13 daily flights and scenic tours from Valletta Waterfront to Mgarr and back. Floats will now be

fitted to the aircraft. The first service is expected to kick off in the coming days. Taking off and landing in the water, the flight would take around 10 minutes.

- **26 May 2007** One of Caravaggio's masterpieces, which has pride of place in Italy, will be flown to Malta to form part of a wider exhibition at St John's Co-Cathedral, in Valletta, celebrating the work of this visionary.
- **26 May 2007** An EU study on working conditions in Europe shows that Malta's statutory minimum wage last year was the most generous when compared to the other new member states and is even better than what is paid in Portugal, which has been an EU member since 1986.
- **26 May 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona was yesterday presented with a DVD of the funeral of the Blessed Gorg Preca by the Department of Information.

- **26 May 2007** Malta registered the highest percentage of food safety inspectors trained by the EU last year when compared to the other member states, according to the annual report of training activities held by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection.
- **26 May 2007** A silver replica stamp bearing the image of Blessed Dun Gorg Preca in one of his characteristic poses and with the chapel of the Society of Christian Doctrine in the background will be issued by the Philatelic Bureau of Maltapost on Monday.
- **26 May 2007** Total nights spent in collective accommodation establishments in March totalled 523,289, an increase of 11 per cent over the corresponding month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 May 2007** The Richmond Foundation will be holding an Open Weekend at Villa Chelsea this weekend to mark the opening of the rehabilitation facility in May 1996 and also to raise awareness on mental health and mental health services. The Open Weekend was opened by Dolores Cristina, Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, yesterday. The event will also serve as a way of raising funds for the Richmond Foundation, a non-governmental, non-profit making organisation.
- **26 May 2007** Alfred Caruana Galizia is the new president of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.
- **26 May 2007** The number of registered unemployed in April stood at 6,748, showing a drop of 789 when compared to April last year and 285 fewer than March this year, according to Employment and Training Corporation statistics released by the National Statistics Office.
- **26 May 2007** The President of Hungary, László Sulyom, will be paying a state visit to Malta between Thursday and June 2. He was invited over by President Eddie Fenech Adami.
- **27 May 2007** The official portrait of St George Preca, that will hang on St Peter's Basilica's façade during the canonisation ceremony that the Pope will lead next Sunday, was released by the Curia.
- **27 May 2007** A major heavy transport vessel yesterday arrived at Malta Shipyards for a conversion project that will take till the end of the year to

complete. The Fairmount Fjell proceeded to the yard's Marsa site and is the second of two major heavy transport vessel conversion projects announced last year.

- **27 May 2007** Hungarian President László Sólyom arrives in Malta for a 40-hour state visit on Thursday afternoon. He will be officially welcomed by the President and Mrs Eddie Fenech Adami on St George's Square, Valletta, on Thursday at 3.30 p.m., where he will also inspect an Armed Forces of Malta guard of honour. Mr Sólyom will later be received by the President at the Palace.
- **27 May 2007** Customer care skills of over 360 taxi, bus and horse-drawn cab drivers, and other persons involved in providing transport to tourists have been improved by means of 32 Merhba training programmes organised by the Malta Tourism Authority in collaboration with ADT.
- **28 May 2007** The Prime Minister has unveiled plans for a new Lm50 million campus to house the Malta Council for Arts, Science and Technology. The campus, to be located close to Gaddafi Gardens, in Paola, will house all the council's institutes as the government embarks on a plan to double the existing number of students to 10,000.
- **28 May 2007** Over 364 transport service providers participated in the Merhba training programme organised by the Malta Tourism Authority in collaboration with the Malta Transport Authority (ADT).
- **28 May 2007** Rock climbing is an important ingredient in the government's efforts to continue strengthening the Malta tourism product, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said. Speaking during the inauguration of the first phase of a project to render an area in Wied Babu, near Zurrieq, fit for rock climbing, Dr Zammit Dimech said there was a great potential for the climbing market that could attract about 8,000 visitors each year.
- **29 May 2007** Patients entitled to free medicines can start picking up their drugs from the pharmacy of their choice in the coming weeks, the Health Ministry said yesterday. Currently between 120,000 and 140,000 are entitled to collect free medicine from the nine state pharmacies in Malta and Gozo.
- **29 May 2007** Ryanair, the low-cost airline, will be operating another four routes from Malta, the government said yesterday. The airline will lay on three flights a week from Bremen in Germany, starting in September. On October 30, it will start three weekly flights from Bari in Italy and Girona in Spain and two weekly flights from Stockholm (Nykoping).
- **29 May 2007** The CEO at the Malta Tourism Authority has an annual salary of Lm36,091 (€84069) , Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said while replying to a parliamentary question yesterday. He also has a government bonus, a performance bonus and telephony services.
- **29 May 2007** There are 60 security officers at St Luke's Hospital, Health Minister Louis said while replying to a parliamentary question, yesterday. He said these officers also attended at health centres and other hospitals in case of shortage.
- **29 May 2007** The five star Radisson SAS Bay Point Resort has been awarded the Marque of Excellence Award by travel giant Thomas Cook UK for 2006.
- **29 May 2007** Around 300 people with a disability will be among the first Maltese to use the new computer programmes Microsoft Vista and Office

Enterprise 2007. IT Minister Austin Gatt said these products - which have a market value of more than Lm300 (€698) - have special features that enable better IT use for people with a disability.

- **30 May 2007** French President Nicolas Sarkozy will soon be inviting leaders of the EU Mediterranean states, including Malta, to take part in a summit to discuss his idea of creating a Mediterranean Union.
- **30 May 2007** The second edition of an IT educational scheme, myPotential, has just been launched following the success of the first courses attended by 600 people.
- **31 May 2007** The Archbishop's Curia said yesterday the total number of Maltese pilgrims travelling to Rome for the canonisation of the Blessed Gorg, Preca on Sunday, could reach over 5,000. The Curia anticipates that some 3,750 Maltese pilgrims will be attending the vigil alone, being held at the Santa Maria Maggiore Church in Rome, on Saturday evening.
- **31 May 2007** The chairman of the European and Foreign Affairs Committee, Nationalist MP Jason Azzopardi, yesterday proposed the setting up of a "health city" in Malta, making it possible for foreign doctors to train on the island.
- **31 May 2007** The Italian/Maltese air-naval exercise Canale 07 will take place in the waters and airspace outside the bay of Augusta, Sicily, between Friday and June 9, aimed at enhancing cooperation, security and stability in the Mediterranean, the armed forces said.
- **31 May 2007** Air Malta will be restarting direct flights to Benghazi in Libya next week with a twice-weekly operation every Tuesday and Thursday. It will be the only international airline operating from that city.

JUNE

- **1 June 2007** A new commercial television station planning to air socio-religious programmes will start test transmissions on July 1 and regular broadcasts in October. UTV (You TV) will be transmitted digitally via Multiplus, a Maltacom subsidiary.
- **1 June 2007** Education Minister Louis Galea yesterday unveiled plans for the lavish new Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology at Corradino. The Lm50 million-project was announced by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi on Sunday but details were only released yesterday. The new project will draw together all the institutes on one campus. Currently, five of the nine institutes are at Corradino and four are located in Naxxar, Mosta, Msida and between Qormi and Luqa.
- **1 June 2007** The Maltese are among the biggest supporters of organ donations after death in the EU, according to a new Eurobarometer survey published in Brussels.
- **1 June 2007** A cheque of Lm12,000 was recently donated to Dar tal-Providenza after students at the Lyceum Dun Guzepp Zammit (Brighella) of Hamrun organised a bicycle marathon.

- **1 June 2007** The Housing Authority has increased the maximum assistance grants for repair works in cases of dangerous structures.
- **2 June 2007** Last month was the driest May of the past seven years with just 0.4 mm of rainfall being recorded at the Malta International Airport last month, the Malta International Airport's Meteorological Office said.
- **2 June 2007** Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom leaves Malta this morning after a two-day state visit. Mr Solyom yesterday held talks with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi at Auberge de Castille, in Valletta, and also met with Labour leader Alfred Sant at San Anton Palace. For photos of this event please click here: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2007/05/hungary.asp
- **2 June 2007** The United Nations has urged Malta to accept recent amendments to maritime conventions, which ensure that a shipmaster's obligation to provide assistance in rescue situations is complemented by a corresponding commitment from governments. Malta is one of the few countries that did not accept these amendments, the UN agency for refugees said yesterday from Geneva.
- **2 June 2007** As from yesterday, Maltese citizens acquired the right of free movement in Switzerland, a non-EU country. This became possible with the entrance into force of an agreement signed between Switzerland and the EU five years ago, facilitating the free movement of persons between 20 EU and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) member states and the Alpine country.
- **3 June 2007** Santa Maria Maggiore basilica in Rome was filled to capacity yesterday as a forceful river of Maltese representing a whole cross-section of society poured into every corner of the 5th century church to pay tribute to Malta's new saint on the eve of his canonisation.
- **3 June 2007** Malta's bathing waters last year made a major quality leap, according to a new report by the European Commission in Brussels yesterday analysing the quality of bathing water during the 'tourism' season in all its member states.
- **4 June 2007** Works on the parvis of St Sebastian church, in Qormi, are expected to be completed by the end of next month. The works consist of the replacement of pipes, the laying of a 2,000-square-metre parvis and the installation of a lighting system, among others.
- **4 June 2007** The electricity surcharge will remain unchanged at 45 per cent for the next two months, despite higher fuel prices, the Investments Ministry said. This means that the automatic 1.2 per cent increase levied bi-monthly has been absorbed by Enemalta Corporation, it added.
- **5 June 2007** June 4, 2007 will be remembered as the day which broke all records for rainfall in June, with the unexpected downpours causing chaos and misery on the flood-prone roads.
- **5 June 2007** EU finance ministers meeting in Luxembourg today are expected to discuss a proposal moved by the European Commission to lift the excessive deficit procedure against Malta following the government's correction of its public finances over the past three years.
- **5 June 2007** The government of Latvia has appointed Marin Hili as honorary consul of the Republic of Latvia for Malta, while Marie-Louise Scerri Montaldo has been appointed vice honorary consul of Brazil for Malta. The government has nominated Andras Sugar, honorary consul of Malta in Budapest, with jurisdiction over Hungary.
- **5 June 2007** In the coming months, 40 new e-government services will be on offer, IT Minister Austin Gatt said yesterday. The minister was inaugurating an

electronic service by means of which jobs in the civil service can be accessed and applied for on recruitment.gov.mt. Malta's challenge lay in improving the results it achieved last year when the EU classified its e-government service as the second most sophisticated in Europe and the third most extensive.

- **6 June 2007** The European Parliament will this afternoon hold an urgent debate in plenary session in Brussels on the latest incidents in the Mediterranean involving illegal immigrants and Malta's call for help from the EU. This eleventh hour decision was taken yesterday evening by the coordinators' group of the Civil Liberties Committee and approved by the European Parliament's administration.
- **6 June 2007** European Union finance ministers yesterday agreed to close the excessive deficit procedure opened against Malta in 2004 "after the Maltese government succeeded in reducing its deficit below three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)", the maximum threshold set by the EU's stability and growth pact.
- **6 June 2007** A power struggle between the European Parliament and the European Commission yesterday led Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs to postpone a vote on a report recommending that Malta join the eurozone.
- **6 June 2007** Siegfried Generics' Malta plant was opened yesterday by Investments Minister Austin Gatt who said its presence here will contribute to the country's attractiveness as a pharmaceutical destination. Dr Gatt said there were 11 pharmaceutical companies in Malta which employed over 600 employees.
- **6 June 2007** A sample survey among manufacturing firms shows that while sales and investment went up in the first quarter of this year when compared to the same quarter last year, there was a drop in employment, the National Statistics Office said.
- **6 June 2007** Mediterranean Conference Centre chairman Peter Fenech will have two major cultural portfolios under his belt after being appointed to head the Manoel Theatre as well. Dr Fenech, a lawyer by profession, will replace Wilfred Kenely, who has just been appointed Malta's first resident High Commissioner to India.
- **6 June 2007** Glass collected from bring-in sites in Malta and Gozo is expected to start being used in road construction once a series of tests currently being carried out are concluded. Environment Minister George Pullicino yesterday coordinated a demonstration on the use of glass in road building in Labour Avenue, Naxxar, on the occasion of this year's Environment Day. Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett was also present.
- **7 June 2007** A total of 5,569 Europeans came to work in Malta between May 1, 2004 and May 24 this year, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said yesterday. Replying to a parliamentary question by Labour MP Joseph Abela, the prime minister said 4,134 of them were full-timers.
- **7 June 2007** The St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation has been awarded a Certificate of Merit for the restoration of the chapel of the Langue of Italy in recognition of a valuable contribution to the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.
- **8 June 2007** A procedural impasse that threatened a derailment of the timing of Malta's adoption of the euro in January 2008 was resolved yesterday following an extraordinary meeting between the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee of the European Parliament and Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joachim Almunia.

- **8 June 2007** Malta's new resident Ambassador to Austria, Christopher Grima, has presented his credentials to Austrian President Heinz Fischer at the Hofburg Imperial Palace, in Vienna.
- **8 June 2007** The government has suspended the tendering process for the leasing of personal computers and laptops and of workstation support for the public service and all public schools.
- **8 June 2007** Spanish low-cost airline Clickair started direct flights from Barcelona to Malta yesterday, amid acclaim for the Malta Tourism Authority's strong promotion campaign in the Spanish city. Clickair will be operating twice weekly to Malta until October with a capacity of 15,000 passengers both ways, 80 per cent of them tourists, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech told a news conference.
- **9 June 2007** Gross Domestic Product for the first quarter rose by 3.5 per cent in real terms over the same period last year, according to provisional estimates released by the National Statistics Office.
- **9 June 2007** Two towers rising to a height of 33 and 27 storeys will soar above the skyline after a company was granted permission to develop a site in Gzira. The development will dwarf the 23-storey Portomaso tower in St Julians, currently the tallest building in Malta. A third high rise building will be 13 storeys high.
- **9 June 2007** A battery-operated experimental electric boat was launched and successfully tested. The project is in a trial phase following the completion of laboratory tests at the University's Faculty of Engineering. The research and the development of the boat is being led by engineer Joe Cilia and a number of faculty students.
- **9 June 2007** A gold replica of the San Gorg Preca Lm1 stamp has been presented to Pope Benedict XVI by Mgr Alfred Xuereb. Gozo Bishop Mario Grech was asked by Maltapost to make arrangements for the presentation on behalf of the company. Mgr Xuereb, from the Gozo diocese, carries out duties at the Casa della Prefettura Apostolica at the Vatican.
- **10 June 2007** Government will in the coming days publish details of a bill which will seek to raise ethical and service standards not just in the public service, but within all public entities. Two of the main provisions in the bill relate to establishing the principle of meritocracy when it comes to promotions as well as giving legal force to a code of ethics that was originally published in 1994.
- **10 June 2007** President Emeritus Guido de Marco was last Tuesday presented with the Il Lazio, tra Europa e Mediterraneo international prize.
- **10 June 2007** Distinguished visitors from the Italian and Maltese governments were hosted on board the Italian Navy ship Espero on Friday to observe Canale 07, the Italian-Maltese air-naval exercise which took place in the waters and the airspace outside the bay of Augusta.
- **10 June 2007** Accompanied by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo and a trade delegation, President Eddie Fenech Adami will consolidate close links and lay the basis for new joint initiatives during his four-day state visit to Cyprus starting today, according to Cypriot Foreign Minister Yiorgos Lillikas.
- **10 June 2007** European Union telecoms ministers last Friday approved the Commission's proposal for a new regulation on roaming on public mobile networks, bringing to an end a year-long legislative process that should result in slashed mobile telephone bills.

- **11 June 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami is in Cyprus where he starts a two-day state visit today. He is due to be welcomed this morning by Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos and will later meet the president of the House of Representatives, Demetris Christofias, Archbishop Chrysostomos II, the mayor of Nicosia, Eleni Mavrou and the mayor of Larnaca, Andreas Moyses.
- **11 June 2007** The Prime Minister on Saturday laid the foundation stone of a home for the elderly in Mellieha. The home is a public private partnership with Care Malta Mellieha Ltd, which will manage it. The home has been designed by Frank Muscat and construction work started in April. It is due to welcome its first residents next year.
- **11 June 2007** The Lm40,000 needed to plant 6,000 trees on the Foresta 2000 site in Mellieha were raised inside five weeks, the Environment Ministry said. The trees will replace the 3,000 trees vandalised on the night of May 8. In addition to the funds, 1,000 pine saplings were donated by Italian Environment Minister Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, who is on a short visit to Malta.
- **12 June 2007** MTA chief executive officer David Mifsud yesterday tendered his resignation after a mere nine months at the helm of the seemingly plagued authority.
- **12 June 2007** Malta yesterday continued to put pressure on the European Commission and its fellow EU member states to agree to a concrete burden-sharing mechanism to deal with illegal immigrants. Malta's Permanent Representative to the EU, Richard Cachia Caruana, sent a letter to all EU permanent representatives and to the Commission, in which he spelt out the proposal that Malta will be submitting to EU justice ministers today.
- **12 June 2007** Malta Air Traffic Ltd and the Malta Air Traffic Controllers Association have signed a collective agreement covering all air traffic control personnel employed by the company, covering the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2012.
- **12 June 2007** A new Bill covering the entire public sector, published yesterday, proposes full protection for genuine whistleblowers who expose irregularities or a breach of ethics. Employees will be given all the necessary backing by the Commission for Public Service if they are in a position to provide proof that any of their colleagues are guilty of misconduct.
- **12 June 2007** A total of 1,291 cars and 57 buses were tested for excessive emissions as a result of SMS reports between April last year and last March, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **12 June 2007** The number of calls to the euro helpline 154 dropped to under 1,000 last month, the lowest since January, when almost 2,000 calls were received. Statistics gathered by the National Euro Changeover Committee show that 20 per cent of the 998 calls received last month were related to the Fair initiative - a commitment to display correct prices in both lira and euro, which was launched in January.
- **12 June 2007** EU fisheries ministers yesterday agreed, at their second attempt in less than a month, to limit fishing for bluefin tuna within the 27-member states' waters to help save the species from extinction.
- **12 June 2007** Meat production during the first quarter of the year amounted to 3,215 tonnes, a decline of 2.3 per cent compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 June 2007** The Maltacom Group was yesterday renamed Go as part of a rebranding exercise that sees a merger between Maltacom, Multiplus and Maltanet. Go Mobile will remain an independent company but will operate within the Go brand.

- **13 June 2007** The University of Malta yesterday launched a new Joint European Masters degree in Early Childhood Education and Care - an area in which Malta, it was asserted, urgently needs to expand its expertise and training opportunities. To date, Maltese personnel who wanted to specialise in the area could only do so abroad.
- **13 June 2007** Moira Grixti, a nursing officer at the Diabetes Clinic of St Luke's Hospital, was awarded the St Luke's Worker of the Year Award. Ms Grixti has been an active committee member of the Maltese Diabetes Association for several years and currently occupies the post of education officer.
- **14 June 2007** Tourist arrivals were up in the first quarter of the year and although they were spending less time in Malta, expenditure was on the increase and they were opting to stay in hotels of a high category, a Deloitte study has shown.
- **14 June 2007** Maltapost and the public entities section of the Union Haddiema Maghqudin have agreed on a new collective agreement as a result of which the situation at the postal services company will return to normal.
- **14 June 2007** A delegation from the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the House of Representatives is in Brussels for talks with three European Commissioners. They will meet Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joaquin Almunia, Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs and Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg.
- **14 June 2007** European Commission President José Manuel Barroso is scheduled to arrive in Malta at about 11 p.m. today.
- **14 June 2007** St Edward's College yesterday announced the appointment of Michael Chittenden, of New Zealand, as the school's new headmaster.
- **15 June 2007** A transport system for Valletta, using bubble-like electric cabs for three passengers, is scheduled to start on June 27, adding a greener dimension to the capital city by reducing air and noise pollution.
- **15 June 2007** More and more people are carrying out financial transactions with the government electronically, data show. The 8,500 transactions made during 2003 increased to 150,000 in 2006 and it is estimated they will reach 250,000 this year, Investment, Industry and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said.
- **15 June 2007** Maltese passengers departing by air and sea in the first four months of this year amounted to 65,487, a 6.8 per cent increase over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said. Over 85 per cent of the total travelled to European Union destinations, the most visited countries being Italy and the UK.
- **15 June 2007** Four Maltese oxen, including two cows, have been bought by Ghammieri, the research centre at the government's experimental farm, in order to continue to propagate the species and save them from extinction.
- **16 June 2007** European Commission President José Manuel Barroso intends calling on other EU states to help Malta deal with its illegal immigration woes at next week's European Council. Mr Barroso met member states' permanent representatives in Brussels on Thursday and asked them to relay to their governments the message that it was high time that the much-touted solidarity is translated into concrete help for Malta.
- **16 June 2007** Jose' Manuel Barroso, the European Commission President, reinforced his call for EU member states to help Malta deal with the influx of illegal immigrants, telling the Maltese Parliament that the EU must turn the principle of solidarity into action. Photos of this event can be found on: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2007/06/barroso.asp

- **16 June 2007** The Bugibba, Qawra, and St Paul's Bay area will be embellished thanks to a series of projects the government will undertake by summer 2009, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said yesterday.
- **16 June 2007** A collective agreement has been signed between the General Workers' Union and Go for the company's clerical and industrial employees. The agreement covers the period January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2009 and sets out a number of new benefits.
- **16 June 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami has congratulated Shimon Peres on his election as President of Israel.
- **16 June 2007** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 766 persons last December while unemployment dropped by 218 persons compared to the same month in 2005, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 June 2007** A new distribution centre to supply power to the Mater Dei Hospital at Tal-Qroqq was inaugurated yesterday by Investments Minister Austin Gatt. The cables supply the new hospital from the Marsa distribution centre and will be enough to satisfy the needs of the hospital when it is fully operational.
- **16 June 2007** Godwin Montanaro, Malta's non-resident Ambassador to Kuwait, presented credentials to the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Mr Montanaro conveyed to the Amir and the people of Kuwait sincere greetings and good wishes from President Eddie Fenech Adami, the government and the people of Malta.
- **17 June 2007** Spanish heartthrob Enrique Iglesias is set to get a crowd of 20,000 people swinging and swaying on the Floriana granaries on July 26 as Isle of MTV's summer music festival kicks off. Malta fended off competition from countries like Croatia to host the music celebration, which will feature performances by Senegalese R&B singer Akon and pop-rock band Maroon 5.
- **17 June 2007** Eleandro Buhagiar cruised his way into the history books last week, becoming the first Maltese to sail across the Atlantic single-handedly when he successfully reached Horta in the Azores 20 days after setting sail from the West Indies on May 14.
- **17 June 2007** The National Book Council yesterday donated Lm4,000 worth of books to the Central Public Library. Around 1,000 books are to be enjoyed by the Maltese at the national library. These were books that did well in the last two editions of the National Book Prize - both by established publishers and self-published books.
- **18 June 2007** The price of a number of medicines sold on the local market should go down by the end of summer, the chairman of the Working Committee on the Pricing of Medicinal Products said.
- **18 June 2007** Maltese surgeon Marcel Gatt has for the second time been awarded the Moynihan Prize, a surgical honour in the United Kingdom.
- **18 June 2007** Mary Darmanin, a lecturer at the University's Department of Educational Studies, has been awarded the Marie Curie Transfer of Knowledge Fellowship at the Equality Studies Centre, University College Dublin School of Social Justice.
- **18 June 2007** Work on the Sant'Antnin waste recycling plant in Marsascala has started and part of the plant will be functional before the end of the year, Environment Minister George Pullicino said.
- **18 June 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami greeted families who turned up at Verdala Palace, Buskett yesterday to view the centuries-old building. Some 150 people were taken around the palace during an open day before

getting a chance to chat with the President, who was dressed casually and in a jovial mood.

- **18 June 2007** Every country should do its utmost to ensure that the rainbow of flags, patrimony, voices and thoughts served as a unifying force, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. Ms Cristina was speaking at the launch of the European Year for Equal Opportunities in Malta, on Saturday.
- **18 June 2007** The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, attended a European conference on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, organised by the German EU presidency in Berlin.
- **19 June 2007** Malta has the second lowest number of workers on the minimum wage in the European Union, according to new statistics published yesterday by Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm.
- **20 June 2007** The Gender Equality Unit at the Employment and Training Corporation has proposed making use of schools as childcare centres to assist working parents. The unit is urging the government to create a national scheme for before and after school hours to make it possible for parents to work longer hours.
- **20 June 2007** The local councils of Attard, Balzan and Lija have joined forces in a bid to ease the traffic problems of the three localities. Their representatives have met officials of the Malta Transport Authority (ADT) where the problems and their possible solutions were discussed. They have identified an expert who will be assisting them in drawing up the traffic management plan, which will then be sent to the ADT for consideration.
- **20 June 2007** The National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, which pigeonholes every qualification obtained in Malta into eight levels, was launched yesterday by Education Minister Louis Galea.
- **20 June 2007** The House of Representatives has started to debate a Bill for the adoption of the EU's Payment Services Directive. Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said, when opening the debate on Monday, that the Financial Institutions Act was being amended in line with the directive so as to facilitate payment transactions across countries within the EU. In this way consumers could enjoy easier and faster transactions within the internal market.
- **20 June 2007** Malta has one of the lowest refugee acceptance rates in Europe but among the highest rates of sanctions for humanitarian protection, according to a report released by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
- **20 June 2007** The Australian High Commission in Malta will hold a series of free information sessions in Valletta and Gozo for people who wish to resume Australian citizenship.
- **21 June 2007** The European Parliament yesterday officially endorsed Malta's entry into the eurozone with overwhelming support for a report approving the European Commission's positive recommendation issued last May.
- **21 June 2007** Fifteen priceless 18th century silver statues are being restored by Sante Guido Restauro e Conservazione Opere d'Art. The exquisite works of art, dating back to 1741 and 1743 and made by Roman silversmith Antonio Arrighi, are housed at the cathedral in Mdina.
- **21 June 2007** Valerie Sollars has become the University of Malta's first woman dean after being appointed to the post with the Faculty of Education for the next four years.
- **22 June 2007** Malta's adoption of the euro was yesterday endorsed, as expected, by EU leaders meeting in the first session of a crucial two-day EU

summit in Brussels, which is expected to be dominated by wrangling over a new treaty for the Union.

- **22 June 2007** EU leaders started intense talks yesterday night aimed at trying to strike a deal on a reformed treaty to make the EU work better and more efficiently.
- **22 June 2007** The pass rate for the Junior Lyceum entrance exams has hit an all-time high. Over 61 per cent of students who sat for the exams passed in the five subjects, registering an increase over the 60.2 per cent in 2006 and 60.44 in 2005, the Education Ministry announced.
- **22 June 2007** A health festival aimed at mobilising the nation to adopt a healthy lifestyle will be held during an open weekend at Mater Dei Hospital on June 30 and July 1, the day after the hospital is officially opened.
- **22 June 2007** A residential home in Birkirkara for persons with disability will be officially opened today at 4.30 p.m. by President Eddie Fenech Adami. It will be blessed by Archbishop Paul Cremona.
- **23 June 2007** An estimated 66,000 foreigners visited Malta to learn English last year, a seven per cent increase over 2005, according to Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech.
- **23 June 2007** President Emeritus Guido de Marco will be awarded the prestigious Robert Schuman medal during the European People's Party meeting in Malta in a fortnight's time.
- **23 June 2007** Cruise passenger traffic last month accounted for 51,746 visitors, an increase of 8,713 or 20.2 per cent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 June 2007** The longest EU summit since enlargement in 2004 ended yesterday morning with all member states appearing to be. Following round-the-clock talks ending at 5 a.m., Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said that the EU had finally reached the desired agreement and that Malta has managed also to safeguard its interests. As a result of this agreement, Malta will be allocated a sixth MEP as from the next European Parliament election in mid-2009, which now brings Malta on an equal footing with Luxembourg.
- **24 June 2007** Malta has been invited to form part of a high-level panel of La Baule World Investment Conference, one of the most important European business meetings.
- **25 June 2007** Villagers in a remote part of Guatemala will receive much-needed protein for their diet when a fish farm funded by Maltese donations starts operating in October.
- **26 June 2007** Malta is soon expected to submit an official application to the European Commission to tap funds aimed at helping laid-off workers. The money, if granted, will be used to help them find alternative employment, particularly through training and the learning of new skills.
- **26 June 2007** The Prime Minister, in a statement to the House yesterday, tabled the conclusions of last weekend's EU summit and said that Malta's position had always been for compromises to be reached on the reform treaty so that this issue could be resolved and the bloc could devote its energies to other important issues.
- **26 June 2007** In April, the total number of nights spent in hotels and other collective accommodation establishments was recorded at 602,542, an increase of 1.7 per cent over the corresponding month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.

- **26 June 2007** On Friday Archbishop Paul Cremona will be among a number of new Metropolitan Archbishops who will be receiving the pallium from Pope Benedict XVI during a Eucharistic celebration at the Vatican on the occasion of the Feast of St Peter and St Paul.
- **26 June 2007** Richard Vella Laurenti, Malta's non-resident Ambassador to Ethiopia, presented credentials to President Girma Woldegiorgis at the presidential palace in Addis Ababa.
- **27 June 2007** The Victoria Hotel has just been awarded the Malta Tourism Authority's Eco-Certification after it complied with almost 130 criteria designed to ensure improved environmental performance.
- **28 June 2007** Malta will be taken before the European Court of Justice within a few weeks if the government continues to insist on retaining the airport departure tax. The Commission decided yesterday to reject the arguments made by the Maltese authorities in response to two legal warnings that the tax is discriminatory and so breaches EU law.
- **28 June 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi will today give a keynote speech at the La Baule World Investment Conference, the culmination of several years of lobbying to be included at this prestigious event, which brings hundreds of top CEOs from all over the world to this French resort on the Atlantic coast.
- **29 June 2007** Ray Muscat has been appointed director general of the Federation of Industry (FOI). He takes over from Wilfred Kenely who has been appointed High Commissioner to India.
- **30 June 2007** Malta has been asked by the European Commission to correct its transposition of an EU directive to monitor the traffic of ships in EU waters. According to Brussels, the transposition by Malta of Directive 2002/59/EC was not done correctly.
- **30 June 2007** Labour MEP John Attard Montalto has been selected by the European Parliament's Industry Committee to be its main spokesman and rapporteur on mutual recognition of products by different member states.
- **30 June 2007** The European Commission has decided to put more pressure on Malta to end state company Enemalta's monopoly over the importation, storage and distribution of petroleum products.
- **30 June 2007** British High Commissioner Nick Archer hosted a reception to mark the end of an eight-month EU funded project involving the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) and the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).
- **30 June 2007** Tourism grew six per cent in the first five months over the same period last year, according to National Statistics Office surveys. The number of tourists from January to May was estimated at 384,380.

JULY

- **1 July 2007** Over 15,000 people thronged to see the Lm220 million Mater Dei Hospital until 6 p.m. yesterday, curious to see the building that will provide treatment with a good dose of comfort.
- **1 July 2007** Casinò di Venezia has introduced a park and ride facility for patrons. With the kind intervention of Vittoriosa mayor John Boxall, agreement was reached with the Vittoriosa Stars football committee and the Fortini

football ground has been placed at the casino's disposal daily from 8 p.m. and at the weekends from 1 p.m.

- **1 July 2007** The foundation stone of the new premises for the Society of Christian Doctrine (MUSEUM) in Triq il-Bzulija, Birzebbuga. was laid during a recent ceremony.
- **2 July 2007** The government may be forced to refund the departure taxes paid by passengers since May 2004 if European Commission action in the European Court is successful. MEP Simon Busuttil, who was the first to question the legality of the departure tax in its existing format said there was good reason for Malta to settle this issue before the court delivers its judgment.
- **2 July 2007** Forty representatives of the 12 new EU member states responsible for EU Structural Funds held a two-day meeting in Malta. The meeting focused on the exchange of experiences, ideas and good practice in relation to the effective management of structural funds and the implementation of EU funded projects.
- **2 July 2007** Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries Francis Agius attended the UK's Faculty of Public Health 2007 annual conference entitled Making Public Health Work in Eastbourne, UK.
- **2 July 2007** The Customs Department yesterday introduced an electronic export control system. The system, which replaces the current manual procedure, covers indirect exports. These are export consignments that leave an EU member state other than the member state exporting them.
- **2 July 2007** Five laboratories are being installed at the Agius de Soldanis Girls Junior Lyceum and Secondary School in Victoria. Works include the installation of a fire security system and a gas system.
- **2 July 2007** The mean temperature in June put the month in the top 10 warmest Junes since 1922, when records started being kept, the Met Office said.
- **2 July 2007** Fuel prices have been adjusted upwards as from today, with the price of petrol going up by 0c7 and diesel by 2c6 per litre, a DOI press release said yesterday evening.
- **3 July 2007** In a bid to make Gozo more accessible, the government yesterday announced the introduction of a direct bus link between the airport and Cirkewwa. Starting on Monday, at a cost of Lm2.15 (€5), the bus will make eight return trips daily, an initiative described as a blessing by the Gozo Tourism Association.
- **3 July 2007** The Drama Unit in the Curriculum Department of Education has launched a Theatre-in-Education project about the introduction of the euro. The project, targetting Year 6 and Form 1 students, is meant to create awareness of this currency to be introduced on January 1.
- **4 July 2007** Unpublicised amendments to a legal notice, published a few weeks ago in the government gazette, have granted new employment benefits to part-time workers as from the beginning of this month. Thousands of part-timers working a minimum of eight hours a week will now be entitled to pro rata benefits such as paid vacation and sick leave and bonuses.
- **4 July 2007** The number of unemployed persons in the first three months of this year was estimated at 11,216 persons. The data result from the Labour Force Survey conducted by the Employment and Training Corporation and released by the National Statistics Office.
- **5 July 2007** The House of Representatives yesterday started debating a Bill for Malta to adopt various EU directives in the financial services sector, notably

the Directive on Capital Adequacy of Investment Firms and Credit Institutions and the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (Mifid).

- **5 July 2007** A Maltese post-graduate student will be starting an internship with French aerospace company Eurocopter this year following a memorandum of understanding signed between French industry and the University of Malta. The agreement, described as a first for the French, covers the granting of internships in French companies to the best post-graduate students and the involvement of the university in research projects.
- **5 July 2007** A total of Lm43,299 have been donated so far for the replacement of trees which were the targets of vandals at Mellieha earlier this year. A list tabled in Parliament yesterday by Environment Minister George Pullicino shows HSBC as having been the biggest donors, with Lm7,000, followed by the Tumas Group with Lm5,000. The Vodafone Foundation, Maltacom and MFIN donated Lm3,000 each.
- **5 July 2007** The government is drawing up a number of regulations governing fuel liberalisation which it expects to publish by September 30. For liberalisation to be successful and advantageous for Maltese citizens, it cannot take place in a regulatory vacuum, the government said yesterday. Once the necessary legal framework was in place, petroleum products would start to be traded in line with the EU Treaty.
- **5 July 2007** HMS Atherstone and HMS Walney will be in Malta between today and Saturday. HMS Atherstone was launched in 1986 and is commanded by Lieutenant Commander G. Dale-Smith. HMS Walney, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Richard Lindsey, was launched in 1991 and commissioned into naval service in August 1992. The vessels will be berthed at Pinto Wharf 3. Due to the short period alongside, they will not be open to the public during their stay.
- **6 July 2007** The flow of illegal migrants in the Mediterranean has dropped by 40 per cent since the start of the patrols by EU border agency Frontex, according to Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini.
- **6 July 2007** The European Commission is expected to adopt its maritime policy in October following more than a year of extensive consultation with stakeholders across the European Union.
- **6 July 2007** Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelelah Al-Khatib told MEPs the European Union must continue empowering the Palestinian President politically and financially and called on Europe to take on a leadership role in the Middle East peace process. Mr Al-Khatib was speaking at the EPP-ED Euro-Parliamentary Group being held in Malta.
- **6 July 2007** European Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot yesterday congratulated Malta saying it had made great progress in enforcing safety measures on the ships flying its flag.
- **6 July 2007** Malta tops the list of new EU countries against which the European Commission has started infringement procedures for failing to apply internal market rules correctly.
- **6 July 2007** President Emeritus Guido de Marco has been awarded the prestigious Robert Schuman medal by the European People's Party (EPP-ED) parliamentary group, which is meeting in Malta for its Study Days conference.
- **6 July 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo yesterday met Abdelelah al-Khatib, Foreign Minister of Jordan, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Valletta. The situation in the Middle East was among the topics raised at the meeting.
- **6 July 2007** The House of Representatives on Wednesday unanimously gave a second reading to a Bill to amend various financial services laws, adopting

the EU Directive on Capital Adequacy of Investment Firms and Credit Institutions and the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (Mifid).

- **7 July 2007** Malta Customs placed third in an international competition organised by the World Customs Organisation to reward efforts to curb the trafficking of counterfeit goods and piracy in 2006. The competition, won by Paraguay, was open to WCO members from 171 countries.
- **7 July 2007** Issues dealing with the maritime sector were discussed between Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea and Jacques Barrot, Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Transport.
- **7 July 2007** An exhibition on relations between Malta and Austria from the days of the Knights of St John to the present times is open at the Austrian State Archives, in Vienna. Speaking at the opening of the exhibition, Christopher Grima, Malta's Ambassador in Vienna, said the event highlights the cultural richness of Malta and Austria and the long-standing links between the two countries. He referred to Malta's heritage and to the role played by the Order in transforming Malta.
- **8 July 2007** Central Bank Governor Michael Bonello has been awarded the Officier de la Legion d'Honneur by the French Republic.
- **8 July 2007** Education and Employment Minister Louis Galea stressed that future labour laws in Europe should be shaped by solidarity and social justice. Addressing a seminar of the EPP-ED Workers' Group on "Working Conditions: How to Create Labour Law In The Future", Dr Galea said humanity was living an information technology revolution preceded only by the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution in terms of importance in human history.
- **8 July 2007** Eleandro Buhagiar finally made port on Thursday afternoon, nearly eight weeks after setting sail from St Martin on May 14 in his attempt to sail to Malta single-handedly on his 37-foot yacht Mahina. Mr Buhagiar, 31 of Mosta, became the first Maltese to sail across the Atlantic solo.
- **8 July 2007** In line with the announced intentions of the new Portuguese presidency to step up efforts to curb illegal immigration, a review of Frontex's functions and tasks is in the offing, the EU border agency's executive director Ilkka Laitinen said in an interview last week.
- **8 July 2007** During the run-up to the various referenda organised in a number of acceding countries to the EU prior to May 2004, the enlarged European Union was being marketed as being rich of opportunities for the citizens of the 25 member states at the time, now 27 with the recent addition of Bulgaria and Romania.
- **9 July 2007** A vehicle exhibition was one of the activities held yesterday to mark the 193rd anniversary of the foundation of the Police Corps. Organised by members, former policemen and their friends, the display was held at the police headquarters, in Floriana. It was followed by a charity ride from the headquarters to Dar tal-Providenza, in Siggiewi, where the money collected during the exhibition was handed over to the administration of the residential homes for the handicapped.
- **9 July 2007** Malta has participated in the Qingdao Asia-Pacific Tourism Expo, which took place at the Qingdao International Convention Centre. The event was organised by the Qingdao Municipal Tourism Administration and the Qingdao International Exhibition and Trade Co. Ltd.
- **10 July 2007** Outlets that do not display both currencies will be liable for a Lm750 fine and customers are being urged to phone the euro helpline 154 or

send complaints to euro@gov.mt. As the compulsory dual display requirement comes into effect in the run-up to the introduction of the single currency on January 1, a spokesman for the National Euro Changeover Committee said around 98 per cent of shops already show prices in both lira and euro.

- **10 July 2007** EU finance ministers meeting in Brussels today are expected to give the final green light to Malta's euro entry. They are also expected to approve the Commission's recommendation to set the permanent exchange rate of the Maltese lira at Lm0.42930 for €1.
- **10 July 2007** Malta has joined nine other southern European Union member states in an open letter to Tony Blair, the Quartet's envoy to the Middle East, urging a fresh perspective on the situation there. The foreign ministers of France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania decided to write to Mr Blair following their meeting in Protoroz, Slovenia.
- **10 July 2007** An independent think tank set up to focus on problems in public policy, offer solutions and spark off debate on future planning and strategy affecting Malta was launched yesterday following its first meeting. Branded the Today Public Policy Institute, the think tank brings together high-calibre individuals with experience in a variety of professional and academic fields and different political backgrounds.
- **11 July 2007** Malta yesterday overcame the last hurdle in the long process to win approval to join the eurozone, as European Union finance ministers voted unanimously for the island to adopt the single currency come January 1. The Ecofin Council, gathered for its first meeting under the Portuguese presidency, also adopted regulations setting the permanent conversion rate of the Maltese lira against the euro.
- **11 July 2007** Cheesecakes, or pastizzi, children with little red and white flags and dancers dressed in the traditional ghonnella yesterday dominated the esplanade in front of the Berlymont, the European Commission's headquarters in Brussels, in a one-hour event organised by the Commission to mark Malta's entry into the euro.
- **11 July 2007** The fight against alcohol abuse took another step forward this month when a new law outlawing the sale and consumption in public of alcohol by under 16-year-olds came into force.
- **11 July 2007** Fifteen companies have been licensed to provide the services of private investigators, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told Evarist Bartolo (MLP) in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **11 July 2007** The police received 153 reports of domestic violence in the first half of this year, including nine in Gozo, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told Parliament yesterday.
- **11 July 2007** Speed cameras netted 38,548 cars in the year up to last June, information given in Parliament yesterday shows. The biggest number cases of speeding, 12,542 were detected at St Julians, followed by 8,359 at Qormi and 5,840 at Attard.
- **11 July 2007** The government deficit for the first quarter of 2007 amounted to Lm36.7 million, Lm1 million below the deficit of Lm37.7 million recorded for the first quarter of last year.
- **11 July 2007** The visible trade gap in the first five months of this year narrowed by Lm60 million to stand at Lm170.7 million, the National Statistics Office said.
- **12 July 2007** Credit rating agencies Moody and Standard and Poor's upgraded their ratings for Malta yesterday after the island was given the final approval to join the eurozone. Moody's said Malta's ratings for long-term

foreign and local currency government bond and long-term country ceilings for foreign currency bank deposits were upgraded from A3 to A2.

- **12 July 2007** The population at the end of last year was estimated to be 405,577, of whom just over half were women, the National Statistics Office said. Twenty four per cent were aged under 20 and 14 per cent were 65 and over.
- **12 July 2007** Lufthansa Technik will contribute €367 million to the Maltese economy within 30 years - excluding the investment being made by the government in the necessary infrastructure, the hangar and training, according to a Malta Enterprise report to the Investments Ministry.
- **12 July 2007** Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono yesterday inaugurated the recently upgraded male and female general wards at the Gozo General Hospital. The works, which also took in the staff dining room, cost around Lm100,000 (€232,937).
- **12 July 2007** The House of Representatives yesterday debated amendments to the Malta Standards Authority Act and other laws which aim to rationalise activities related to the maintenance of standards under the umbrella of the Malta Standards Authority.
- **12 July 2007** About 450 residential roads will be resurfaced by the end of 2008 thanks to an investment by the government of Lm9 million (nearly €21 million), Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said.
- **12 July 2007** David Spiteri Gingell has been appointed chief executive officer of Enemalta Corporation with effect from Monday. He replaces Anthony Rizzo who resigned last February. Mr Rizzo had been appointed CEO in January 2006.
- **12 July 2007** A report issued in Brussels yesterday on the transposition of EU rules covering the European arrest warrant shows that there are still some minor improvements to be made in Maltese legislation to come fully in line.
- **12 July 2007** The European Commission has awarded the Don Bosco Voluntary Service (DBVS) for "best-practice" in work with marginalised youth in Malta. The young volunteers of the DBVS are a branch of the Salesian organisation within St Patrick's in Sliema. They were given the award in recognition of the sterling work they did in conjunction with St Patrick's Care Team during the summer of 2004.
- **13 July 2007** The police force yesterday celebrated Police Day with 27 officers receiving a long service and efficiency medal after spending at least 18 years in the corps. Another 30 were promoted to the rank of sergeant.
- **13 July 2007** The number of Maltese passengers departing by air and sea in the first five months of the year totalled 86,689, an increase of 4.2 per cent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said yesterday.
- **13 July 2007** There are currently 39 licensed fireworks factories, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told Parliament.
- **13 July 2007** No racism complaints in schools have been received, Education Minister Louis Galea told Carmelo Abela (MLP) in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **15 July 2007** The government has decided to allocate a large percentage of the new EU funds granted to Malta for the period 2007-2013 to an unprecedented road upgrading programme which should bring Malta's main road arteries up to EU standard. Substantial funds will also be allocated for the restoration of the bastions and flood relief.

- **15 July 2007** The Department of Family Medicine has launched a Master's Degree in Family Medicine, which will be available as from October.
- **16 July 2007** Malta's euro coins, which will become the island's currency in January, will start being minted on Friday at the Monnaie de Paris, the French mint. The process of minting 200 million pieces will get underway after a traditional ceremony known as "the breaking of the coin" which takes place every time a new coin is produced.
- **16 July 2007** A new cultural agreement between Italy and Malta is due to be signed shortly, according to Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech. The minister was speaking prior to a concert by the Banda Musicale della Polizia Di Stato at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, in Valletta, marking the 40th anniversary of the signing of the first cultural agreement between the two countries. **17 July 2007** The government said it has sold its shares in Tug Malta Ltd to Italian company Rimorchiatori Riuniti Genoa Spa, thus privatising the company set up in the 1980s.
- **17 July 2007** Malta's technical preparations for the adoption of the euro in January have been outstanding, according to a new analytical report published by the European Commission in Brussels.
- **17 July 2007** A tailor-made website for children, complete with games for different age groups, was launched yesterday to help youngsters get used to the euro before Malta changes currency in January. The website - www.skola.gov.mt/euro - also includes tips for teachers.
- **17 July 2007** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation last month stood at 1.1 per cent while in May the inflation rate stood at 1.4 per cent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **17 July 2007** SmartCity has announced plans to go green by adopting globally-benchmarked environmentally-friendly practices that will make its developments highly energy and resource efficient.
- **18 July 2007** A "historic agreement" that should bring about a reform in education, starting from kindergarten level, was signed yesterday between the education authorities and the Malta Union of Teachers. The agreement comes a year after Parliament enacted legislation for this purpose.
- **18 July 2007** According to a report published this week, the Maltese rank seventh in Europe's Happy Planet Index. Malta has outperformed countries like France, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany for ecological efficiency at delivering well-being. Iceland, Sweden and Norway top the list. The New Economics Foundation, which compiled the list, found that Europe was less ecologically efficient now than it was 40 years ago.
- **18 July 2007** Parliament yesterday debated amendments to the VAT Act aimed at stamping out abuse by merchants who import products without paying VAT. Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said this Bill was being moved in agreement with the Chamber of Commerce and the GRTU. While parallel trading was allowed, there had to be a level playing field for everybody.
- **18 July 2007** Works are in progress at the new Cottonera secondary school - the third to be built by the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools - which is steeped in heritage and set to offer students a rich, historical environment. The secondary school is part of the Cottonera College, which includes a number of primary schools in the area and other secondary schools.
- **19 July 2007** The Prime Minister yesterday unveiled a White Paper containing the government's proposals for a Freedom of Information Act, building on a

series of measures that have already been taken for more transparency and accountability.

- **19 July 2007** The government has set aside a huge chunk of the EU budget allocation for 2007-2013 to generate more and better jobs, create a knowledge-based economy and improve the environment and the infrastructure, the Prime Minister said.
- **19 July 2007** New imaging equipment at Mater Dei Hospital was used on patients over the past week as managerial staff starts moving to the new hospital from today.
- **19 July 2007** An estimated 435,000 cruise passengers are to visit Malta this year, marking a 10-per-cent increase over 2006 - already a record year with 394,567 passengers, Viset Malta plc general manager Chris Paris said.
- **20 July 2007** President Eddie Fenech Adami has asked Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi for his "special understanding" of Malta's situation vis-à-vis the problem of illegal immigration. In a letter delivered personally to Col Gaddafi by Foreign Minister Michael Frendo in Tripoli on Wednesday, Dr Fenech Adami emphasised the island's concern at the influx of illegal immigrants into Malta in view of its size and the fact that it is the most densely populated country in the region.
- **20 July 2007** Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech yesterday met French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde and discussed Malta's adoption of the euro, easier participation by SMEs in the EU procurement process and proposals for VAT on financial services. Following the 30-minute meeting, Ms Lagarde warmly congratulated Malta for having achieved the criteria to join the single currency.
- **20 July 2007** A study just published by the European Commission predicts acute water shortages in southern Europe, including Malta. The study warns that if no concrete water saving measures are taken and current climate change effects continue, Malta could end up with 50 per cent less water resources by 2070.
- **20 July 2007** The first phase of the migration process from St Luke's Hospital to Mater Dei Hospital kicked off yesterday with the start of the transfer of the management offices.
- **20 July 2007** Sea transport by the scheduled ferries between Malta and Gozo in the second quarter of this year increased compared to the same quarter last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 July 2007** Malta took another giant step towards euro adoption yesterday when a mint in Bordeaux, France, started producing euro coins carrying Maltese national symbols.
- **21 July 2007** A new report released in Brussels on bridging the gender pay gap in the EU shows that Malta is the best performing member state.
- **22 July 2007** In the pre-Budget document Familji fis-Sod (Families on a Sound Footing), which the Prime Minister unveiled at the Auberge de Castille yesterday, Dr Gonzi, who is also finance minister, is promising a Budget focused on families. More information on the press conference can be obtained from:
<http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/News/newsitems/audiorecording%20-21.07.07pb08.asp>
- **22 July 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo's meeting with Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi last Wednesday is being seen as having sealed a growing closer relationship between Malta and Libya. It follows a highly successful session of the Joint Economic and Trade Commission between Malta and

Libya in Tripoli a few months ago in which a number of initiatives were agreed to, including holding discussions on adjacent maritime areas and illegal immigration.

- **23 July 2007** Jason L. Davis has assumed his duties as Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, in Floriana.
- **23 July 2007** Joseph Zammit Tabona has been appointed non-executive chairman of Viset Malta plc with effect from July 2.
- **24 July 2007** Just a few days before EU institutions rise for the summer recess, EU Foreign Ministers and Commission President José Manuel Barroso yesterday met in an intergovernmental conference formation in Brussels in the last leg of negotiations leading to a new EU treaty. The IGC, which will discuss the last technical issues before the new treaty is signed, is scheduled to conclude its work by mid-October.
- **24 July 2007** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation in June stood at 1.37 per cent, compared to 1.67 in May, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 July 2007** Hundreds of IT students are expected to benefit from a series of measures facilitating admission to the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology's ICT course. The measures will also assist students following a course and who intend to further their studies, Education Minister Louis Galea and IT Minister Austin Gatt told a news conference yesterday.
- **24 July 2007** Cruise passenger traffic last month amounted to 55,407, an increase of 69.9 per cent or 22,790 passengers over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 July 2007** The government yesterday unveiled two comprehensive documents intended to stimulate small businesses and the self-employed. Launched by the Prime Minister, Competitiveness Minister Censu Galea and by Parliamentary Secretary Edwin Vassallo, the documents incorporate a series of mission statements and initiatives to help the sector face up to increasing competition.
- **25 July 2007** The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will pay a short private visit to Malta in November.
- **25 July 2007** Enemalta experienced the highest electricity demand ever in its 30 years of operation at 1 p.m. on Monday, with the load reaching 434MW.
- **25 July 2007** Malta is set to start marketing itself as a destination for health tourism. A commercial has been shot for this purpose and will be aired in the US and the UK next month. Plans about the campaign are expected to be unveiled.
- **26 July 2007** A scholarship scheme for undergraduates was launched yesterday by the Education Minister. The Malta Government Scholarship Scheme - Undergraduate Courses (MGSS-UG) provides scholarships to students reading for a first Bachelor or Honours degree, starting in October.
- **26 July 2007** The EU27 external current account recorded a deficit of €32.0 billion in the first quarter of this year, compared with a deficit of €36.2 billion in the first quarter of last year and a deficit of €18.1 billion in the fourth quarter of 2006. This provisional data, subject to revision, was issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Communities.
- **27 July 2007** Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina presented close to Lm750,000 to a number of voluntary organisations working in the social sector. This was an increase of more than Lm60,000 on the amount allocated last year.

- **27 July 2007** Over Lm107,325 (€250,000) will be granted to tomato growers and processors to promote freshly-processed products, the Minister of Rural Affairs said.
- **28 July 2007** Malta has appealed for the swift resumption of the EU borders patrols - with the added participation of Libya - as the Frontex operations ended yesterday.
- **28 July 2007** It is the government's intention to present its 2008 budget by mid-October, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said yesterday. Mr Fenech was addressing the social partners at the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development in the first meeting following the publication of the pre-budget document last Saturday.
- **28 July 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first half of the year stood at Lm75.7 million, Lm1.6 million higher than the shortfall reported for the first six months of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 July 2007** Francis Tabone, High Commissioner for Malta to New Zealand, presented his credentials to the Governor General of New Zealand, Anand Satyanand, in Wellington, New Zealand.
- **28 July 2007** The number of registered unemployed persons last month dropped by 724 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The number of registered unemployed stood at 6,337.
- **28 July 2007** Malta will be represented very visibly in a five-month celebration of Europe's culture being organised all over Belgium. Every two years, Europalia, an international non-profit making association, organises an international multidisciplinary arts festival to celebrate one invited country's cultural heritage in Belgium.
- **29 July 2007** The National Commission Persons with Disability, the University of Malta, and MCAST have been co-operating in the APT-Leonardo project - Access to Professional Training for Disabled Persons.
- **29 July 2007** The Malta Freeport Corporation is to sell its shares in Oiltanking Malta Ltd. The recommendation by the corporation to sell the shareholding was approved by the Ministry for Investment following a Cabinet decision.
- **30 July 2007** Malta International Airport's Meteorological Office has received EU certification for having satisfied the high standards required by EU regulations. MIA said the met office has been awarded an ISO 9001 2000 certification issued by Moody International, becoming the only air navigation service provider on the island and the Malta Flight Information Region.
- **30 July 2007** The Education Minister said that apart from the building of new schools, works were being carried out on modernising over 40 state schools. The minister was speaking during a visit to the Annibale Preca primary school in Lija.
- **30 July 2007** group of 21 Form 4 students from Cottonera have successfully concluded a month-long work experience. The students attend Lorenzo Gafà Boys' Secondary School. in Fortini, forming part of Cottonera College. The experience was done at Malta Shipyards, the Guttenberg Press and Vista Coop.
- **30 July 2007** Former Presidents Guido de Marco and Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg and MEP Simon Busuttil have been presented with the Peter the Great medal, a diplomatic award by the National Committee for Public Awards of the Russian Federation.

- **31 July 2007** Tourism for the first six months of 2007 has turned out to be the best in the last six years, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said as new figures showed a rise of 6.4 per cent in the number of visitors and 3.7 per cent in tourist expenditure for the period.
- **31 July 2007** Lombard Bank Malta plc has become the major shareholder in Maltapost plc paying the government Lm1.22 million (€2.84 million) for another 25 per cent of the company's shares, raising its stake to 60 per cent.

AUGUST

- **1 August 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi started his two-week tour of Australia at the place where 310 Maltese children and many others began theirs - Fremantle - with a visit to the Child Migrant monument which stands at the western tip of the country.
- **1 August 2007** The government will be extending its maintenance grants scheme as the number of university and post-secondary students eligible to a grant grows to an expected 15,500 in the next academic year, Education Minister Louis Galea said.
- **1 August 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona has been made Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem for Malta.
- **1 August 2007** Air Malta carried 880,654 passengers in the first six months of this year, an increase of over 24,000 travellers over the same period last year.
- **2 August 2007** The largest political group in the European Parliament, the EPP-ED group, yesterday appealed to European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini to restart, as soon as possible, the EU's anti-immigration patrols off the Maltese coast. The month-long Nautilus II, the second EU patrol mission to be held in the Sicily-Malta-Libya strait, ended last week.
- **2 August 2007** Yesterday evening, at the Victorian town hall in Adelaide, the second stop of Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi's two-week tour of Australia, siblings Josie and Bob Agius made a point of welcoming the Prime Minister in their three native tongues and presenting him with an Aboriginal boomerang.
- **2 August 2007** Daytime temperatures in July reached a mean of 31.7°C, 1.3°C higher than the average of the past 85 years. The hottest day last month was July 24 when the thermometer climbed to 39.1 °C, Malta International Airport's Meteorological Office said.
- **2 August 2007** Second and subsequent generation Maltese born abroad can now apply for - and be given - Maltese citizenship after amendments to the Citizenship Act, which were passed in Parliament earlier this year, came into effect yesterday. Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told a news conference yesterday the amendments enable children whose father or mother were of Maltese descent to gain Maltese citizenship.
- **3 August 2007** Air Malta is officially Europe's best performing airline, with passengers less likely to lose their bags or have their flight cancelled compared to any other company, according to a new report.
- **3 August 2007** The centre of the Tal-Qroqq circus, on top of the Regional Road tunnel, will be developed into a skating park, apart from offering other recreational activities.

- **3 August 2007** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority yesterday unanimously approved an application for the demolition of factories and clearance at the SmartCity project site.
- **4 August 2007** A new scheme was launched yesterday giving victims of violent crime the right to claim up to Lm10,000 in compensation from the government. New legal provisions, that came into force yesterday, stipulate that victims of violent crime who have unsuccessfully tried to obtain compensation from their aggressors will now be able to make their case before the government. The cases will be adjudicated by the Attorney General.
- **4 August 2007** The USS Donald Cook (DDG-75) is in Malta on a brief visit. William J. Parker III is the commander of the Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyer. She was launched in 1997.
- **4 August 2007** Every local council will be getting Lm1,000 from HSBC to undertake community initiatives in aid of the environment, children, education or heritage, the bank said.
- **4 August 2007** An analysis by the European Commission to establish whether mobile network companies in the EU are getting in line with new regulations on cheaper roaming charges found that the two Maltese networks, Go Mobile and Vodafone, have already started offering the new tariffs to customers.
- **5 August 2007** Almost 1,200 young people have chosen to take up Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as their subject of studies at MCAST.
- **6 August 2007** Branded as the Silent Warriors, the terracotta soldiers that have mesmerised thousands of visitors at the Museum of Archaeology, in Valletta, are on their way to their "regimental barracks" in Xian, China.
- **6 August 2007** The revamped Air Malta portal has proven to be an overwhelming success, doubling the number of online bookings in just two months. Since the new version went online at the beginning of June, the airmalta.com site has attracted 250,000 visitors, resulting in 10,000 bookings a month.
- **6 August 2007** The budget is likely to be presented in Parliament as early as October 8 or 9, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said yesterday. Speaking to The Times, Mr Fenech said the government was aiming to present the budget as early as possible.
- **6 August 2007** A service designed to transport passengers in trackless trains in tourist areas is expected to start on January 1. The tendering process closes at noon on September 28 and the contract is expected to be finalised and signed by the end of October, the Roads and Urban Development Ministry said.
- **6 August 2007** A delegation from the Libyan General People's Committee for Health and the Environment last week had meetings with officials from the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care. The training of health care professionals and the sharing of expertise in areas such as family medicine were discussed.
- **7 August 2007** Fireworks enthusiasts at the St Mary's Band Club came to know that their fireworks had won the coveted world fireworks championship known as Caput Lucis Festival - the capital of light festival, on the outskirts of Rome in Italy.
- **7 August 2007** About 200 million euro coins with the Maltese national side, being minted at the Monnaie de Paris in France, will be transported to Malta next month.

- **7 August 2007** An extension of the Park and Ride scheme at Blata l-Bajda is nearing the final phase with parking spots soon to be increased from 950 to 1,250, Urban Development and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said.
- **8 August 2007** Nine expectant mothers yesterday became the first outpatients to receive medical services at the new hospital as the first department, the parentcraft unit, moved to Mater Dei. The hospital was officially opened on June 29 and has yet to take its first inpatients. Migration of the various departments is taking place over several months, and kicked off last month with the management and administration.
- **8 August 2007** The number of people using the public transport rose by 7.2 per cent in the first seven months of this year, a clear indication that the system has improved, the Urban Development and Roads Ministry claimed yesterday.
- **8 August 2007** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office yesterday informed the Malta High Commission in London that Sir Brooke Charles Boothby has been recognised as Honorary Consul for Malta in Wales and Tom Kelly, OBE as Honorary Consul in Belfast and Northern Ireland.
- **8 August 2007** €2 million worth of EU Regional Funds have gone towards the new community institute at the Malta Council for Arts, Science and Technology. The institute, which will cater for over 600 students, will provide courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and services to the community.
- **8 August 2007** The Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division (PPCD) at the Office of the Prime Minister is extending its call for project proposals issued under Operational Programme II, Empowering People of More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life, to include Priority Axis I: Focus area - ICT.
- **9 August 2007** Mary Galea, a pioneer in spinal cord injury treatment who emigrated to Australia as a toddler, has been awarded a prestigious scholarship by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.
- **9 August 2007** The Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care and Affiliated Computer Services, Inc. (ACS) yesterday signed a formal agreement that will improve the delivery of healthcare to patients and ensure more accurate and safe digitally stored medical records, the government said.
- **9 August 2007** A cash prize of Lm250 has been awarded to David Bailey by the Malta Internet Foundation. Mr Bailey, who was reading for a BSc IT (Hons) degree at the University of Malta, was awarded the prize for his final year project called IPv6NST - a Network Simulation Tool for IPv6.
- **10 August 2007** An Australian business which has created a revolutionary formula that eliminates 98 per cent of the salt content from deteriorating stonework within 14 days intends to strike an agreement with a company in Malta to produce and distribute the product throughout Europe. Entrepreneur Sydney Borg, who is president of the Australian-Maltese Chamber of Commerce, told Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi yesterday during a meeting at the Maltese consulate offices in Sydney that he recently met in Malta with representatives from Berger Paints, owned by Polidano Brothers, to discuss the initiative.
- **10 August 2007** Malta's fertility rate has dropped markedly over a decade, resulting in a significant decline in the number of children on the island, according to results from the newly released Census of Population and Housing 2005. Between 1995 and 2005 the average number of children born per mother dropped from 3.0 to 2.6.
- **11 August 2007** The visible trade gap last month stood at Lm44 million, down by Lm10.6 million from the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

- **11 August 2007** The number of foreign nationals living in Malta rose to three per cent of the population in 2005, reaching 12,112, according to the Census of Population and Housing. In 1995 only 1.9 per cent of residents were foreigners.
- **12 August 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi is to instruct the National Euro Changeover Committee to conduct an information campaign in Australia and other countries populated by Maltese migrants to make them aware of the implications of Malta changing its currency.
- **12 August 2007** Girls aged 12-14 are much more conscious about the risks of communicating with strangers through the Net than boys in the same age bracket. A qualitative survey conducted by the European Commission in the 27 EU member states assessing the use of the Internet and mobile phones by the younger generation shows that Maltese children are very well versed with both means of communication and are also aware of the risks these new technologies can pose.
- **12 August 2007** An exhibition on surveys and archaeological excavations at Mgarr ix-Xini Valley was opened yesterday by Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech at Xewkija Primary School. The excavations are part of the Regional Park Project for the area.
- **12 August 2007** The National Youth Council urged Maltese youths to take an active part in decision-taking and to air their views on current affairs. In a message for International Youth Day, being marked today with the theme "Be seen, Be heard: Youth participation for development", the council said youth participation in decision-taking not only helped views their personal development but was also a useful contribution to society.
- **13 August 2007** Fresh fruit and vegetable availability for the second quarter this year dropped marginally by 0.3 per cent, from 13.83 million kilos in the second quarter of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **14 August 2007** Under a third of Malta's women were in employment in November 2005, when the last census of population was carried out, and a fifth of them worked as clerks, the most common occupation among females. According to the census results, 153,483 persons, or 45.8 per cent of the population aged 15 and over, were employed. Another 11,183, or 3.3 per cent, were unemployed with the remaining 170,810 persons, or 50.9 per cent, falling into the category of inactive.
- **15 August 2007** The USS Kearsarge, a Wasp class multipurpose amphibious assault ship, will enter Grand Harbour today. The ship's primary mission is the embarkation, deployment, landing and support of a Marine landing force.
- **16 August 2007** Malta Freeport Corporation Limited and Oiltanking GmbH have sold a 45 per cent shareholding in Oiltanking Malta Ltd to 3i Infrastructure Ltd. As a result of the sale, Malta Freeport disposed of its entire 30 per cent shareholding for Lm12.7 million (€29.6 million) and Oiltanking GmbH has diluted its shareholding from 70 per cent to 55 per cent.
- **16 August 2007** The government is proposing a tax cut of up to Lm100 on children's sport-related bills as part of its new national sports strategy. Besides a direct tax cut to parents, the strategy also proposes, on the same lines, a tax refund scheme on sports-related investment and tax credits to companies that sponsor sporting events.
- **16 August 2007** The project selection process for the proposals received following the launch of the first call under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund 2007-2013 is expected to

be concluded by the end of this year. This was announced by the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD) at the Office of the Prime Minister.

- **17 August 2007** Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association President Josef Formosa Gauci yesterday confirmed that tourism arrivals were significantly up in June, July and the first two weeks of August, with hotel occupancy last month being "very good" and marking substantial increases on last year's trends.
- **17 August 2007** The Malta Communications Authority yesterday granted rights of use of radio frequencies to 3G Telecommunications Ltd for the establishment and operation of a third generation (3G) mobile communications network.
- **17 August 2007** The government has published the second report on a visit to the immigrants' detention centres in 2005 by the Prevention from Torture Committee (CPT) of the Council of Europe, as well as its response and update reports that highlighted the significant changes and progress carried out since then.
- **18 August 2007** The health authorities will be making "an extra effort" to recruit nurses from other EU countries, a spokesman for the Health Division said yesterday. The nurses will be employed "as soon as possible", according to the spokesman. A call for applications has been made because of a shortage in the health sector.
- **18 August 2007** Joe Catania is the new board secretary at the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa).
- **18 August 2007** The Middlesea Group results for the first half of this year have seen profits before taxation amounting to Lm1.93 million (€4.5m), reflecting an increase of 55 per cent over the profits of Lm1.24 million (€2.89m) registered last year.
- **18 August 2007** Total expenditure on social security benefits amounted to Lm126.1 million during the first half of this year, up by Lm6.8 million over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **19 August 2007** A multilingual guide that aims to familiarise refugees with the euro is being published by the National Euro Changeover Committee.
- **19 August 2007** Government on Friday signed an agreement to provide local fishermen with fuel for their vessels for which it will not levy excise duty.
- **20 August 2007** Work to restore the statue of St Paul on St Paul's Island has started following the erection of scaffolding around the weather-beaten monument. The restoration is being financed by Vassallo Builders under an agreement with Din l-Art Helwa, the national trust.
- **20 August 2007** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (Mepa) decided 763 applications last month and received 622 new applications, bringing the net pending caseload at the end of the month to 4,901.
- **21 August 2007** Mark Miceli-Farrugia recently presented his credentials as Malta's Ambassador to the United States to President George W. Bush at the White House.
- **22 August 2007** The Consumer and Competition Division (CCD) is proposing the appointment of a second arbiter for the Consumer Claims Tribunal given the fact that having only one could result in cases failing to be heard due to a conflict of interest.
- **22 August 2007** A high level euro security group has been set up to ensure increased security arrangement for the movement of euro cash to Malta. A spokesman for the National Euro Changeover Committee said the security

group is made up of the Police Commissioner, the Armed Forces Commander, the Central Bank Governor, the airport's head of security and the committee's executive director.

- **22 August 2007** The registered number of unemployed in July dropped by 748 to 6,332 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 August 2007** Malta has moved closer to obtaining a larger representation in the European Parliament (EP) as from mid-2009 after the Portuguese EU presidency yesterday confirmed that the island's right to a sixth EP seat has been included in the draft EU reform treaty being discussed by the 27 member states.
- **24 August 2007** The number of reported traffic accidents in the second quarter of the year was 4,036, 39 fewer than in the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 August 2007** The George Cross Island Association (GCIA) held a service of Remembrance and Re-Dedication at the Church of All Hallows in Tower Place, London on the second anniversary of the Dedication of the National Malta Memorial.
- **24 August 2007** The number of licensed motor vehicles stood at 282,965 at the end of June, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 76 per cent were private vehicles, while commercial vehicles made up 16.3 per cent.
- **24 August 2007** Total cruise passenger traffic amounted to 58,237 in July, an increase of 16,649 passengers over the same month in 2006, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **24 August 2007** A 300-page full-colour publication covering years of research into the historical and present life of Malta and the Maltese has just been published. The book, entitled The Malta Book Of Records And Firsts, focuses on the many firsts, achievements and records held by the Maltese. Some of these records are (or were) world records.
- **25 August 2007** The overall occupancy rate in collective accommodation establishments (net use) rose by 5.3 per cent in June 2007 when compared to the same month a year earlier, to stand at 66.2 per cent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 August 2007** A number of divers have joined the Biological Conservation Research Foundation's biodiversity project, contributing to it by observing and recording sea organisms.
- **28 August 2007** Malta will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the European Social Fund (ESF) during a four-day activity to be held in both Malta and Gozo next week. Since Malta joined the European Union in 2004, ESF has funded training for more than 7,000 people, leading to the creation or retention of more than 1,000 jobs in Malta and Gozo.
- **29 August 2007** The Marsa power station is scheduled to be decommissioned in seven to eight years' time, making available to the government a huge piece of real estate that could be used to revive the inner Grand Harbour.
- **30 August 2007** The government has announced a plan to settle within the next 28 months some Lm17 million in long overdue tax refunds owed to about 21,000 individuals and companies. Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said yesterday the government had made the pledge to settle the issue in last year's budget speech.
- **30 August 2007** The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Malta has registered over 27,000 candidates for the ECDL Core course and almost 2,000

candidates for ECDL Advanced since it was launched locally in 2003. More recently ECDL Malta was among the first countries to launch three new certifications: e-Citizen, ECDL ImageMaker and ECDL WebStarter.

- **30 August 2007** Malta was indicated as one of the EU member states that need to step up their efforts in order to make sure no racial or xenophobic discrimination is allowed to take place.
- **31 August 2007** Tourist departures last month are estimated at 147,700, implying an increase of 12.1 per cent over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **31 August 2007** Total sales by sampled manufacturing enterprises in the second quarter of this year increased by Lm6.5 million, or 2.6 per cent, to Lm260.2 million when compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **31 August 2007** Norman Aquilina, senior vice-president of the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, has been appointed member of the Business Chamber of the European Union's Enterprise Policy Group (EPG).

SEPTEMBER

- **1 September 2007** Government revenue from income tax up to the end of July exceeded forecasts by Lm14 million (€32611227.58), confirming that the economy was doing well, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Finance Minister, Tonio Fenech, said.
- **1 September 2007** The Department of Contracts short-listed six candidates in the procurement process for a plant capable of generating a minimum of 100MW of electricity to help Enemalta meet the rising needs of Malta's growing economy, the corporation said.
- **1 September 2007** About 250 courses intended for adults will kick off next month as part of a government bid to promote lifelong learning, Minister Louis Galea said.
- **2 September 2007** The Grand Harbour, the backdrop to Malta's history, is set to experience a regeneration as Government unveiled 20 proposed projects that would revamp the area while respecting its historic value, Minister Austin Gatt said during a conference held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre.
- **2 September 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi toured a number of projects around the island covering housing, school maintenance, storm water, sports, the elderly and animals.
- **2 September 2007** August daytime temperatures, showed a mean of 31.9°C, 1.2°C higher than the monthly average of the past 85 years.
- **2 September 2007** PBS chairman John Camilleri resigned on Tuesday, sending his letter of resignation to Investments Minister Austin Gatt, who accepted his decision to step down. The two other editorial board members - Dominic Fenech and Mary Ann Lauri - remain in office, though they backed Mr Camilleri.

- **3 September 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure for the first seven months of this year amounted to Lm89.7 million (€208.94), the National Statistics Office said.
- **3 September 2007** Practically all the pharmacies in Malta have registered to take part in the pharmacy of your choice scheme, the president of the Chamber of Pharmacists, Maryanne Sant Fournier told The Times.
- **3 September 2007** A total of 3,613 tonnes of meat were produced in the second quarter of this year, an increase of 9.6% over the comparative period in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **4 September 2007** European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini defended Malta's record in the EU's fight against illegal immigration and rejected demands by various MEPs to condemn Malta's behaviour, in a series of replies given to parliamentary questions submitted by MEPs in the aftermath of a series of incidents in the Mediterranean last May involving illegal immigrants.
- **4 September 2007** The Cabinet approved the transfer of 25% of the government's shares in Maltapost to Lombard Bank for Lm1,217,585 (€2,836,210).
- **4 September 2007** Archbishop Tommaso Caputo has been appointed Apostolic Nuncio. He takes over from Mgr Felix del Blanco Prieto, who was recently appointed Papal Almoner.
- **4 September 2007** The government wants Malta to be the "most exclusive" tourist destination in the Mediterranean by 2015, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi told the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, during a political meeting where Dr Gonzi met the MHRA to discuss how Malta could be a centre of excellence by 2015.
- **4 September 2007** The Consumer and Competition Division at the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications is drawing the attention of businesses and professionals about certain forms they may have received or may receive from companies or other entities not based here asking them to correct their contact details so that their databases/registers can be updated.
- **5 September 2007** Childcare issues were at the forefront of the discussion at the start of another public consultation process on Budget 2008 following the publication of the pre-budget document.
- **5 September 2007** Malta's allocation of another seat in the European Parliament (EP) was again confirmed during the start of a debate on the system to be used for the allocation of seats at Parliament to get in line with the new reform treaty.
- **5 September 2007** Fifty photovoltaic (PV) panels installed on the Gozo Administration Centre's rooftop have generated more than 13000kWh of electricity in the space of nine months, equivalent to the amount consumed by about 10 persons living in average households, Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo said during a discussion.
- **6 September 2007** Ambassador Saviour Borg has presented his credentials to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as the new Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations in New York.
- **6 September 2007** The Youth Section within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment is holding the All Different - All Equal Campaign For Diversity, Human Rights And Participation that aims to encourage and support young

people to participate in bringing about a more peaceful and inclusive environment.

- **6 September 2007** Hundreds of MEPs and officials of the European Parliament turned up on the opening night of a Maltese Week organised at the European Parliament in Strasbourg by MEPs Simon Busuttill and David Casa.
- **6 September 2007** The heritage foundation 'Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna' is undertaking a large-scale revamp of Fort Rinella aided by the Good Causes Fund of the Ministry of Finance.
- **7 September 2007** The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, is offering a one-year programme for school leavers who have been assessed as having a moderate intellectual impairment.
- **7 September 2007** The producer price index for agricultural products stood at 99.1 points in the second quarter of 2007, an increase of 2.2 points (+2.3 %) from 96.9 points in the same period a year earlier, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 September 2007** The Valletta local council submitted an application for EU funding for a project that aims to improve tourist mobility in the capital by upgrading six major streets and creating five internodal pedestrian city links from the Marsamxett area to the Grand Harbour area, Valletta mayor Dr Paul Borg Olivier told The Times.
- **8 September 2007** Judge Ena Cremona, who has been sitting on the European Court of First Instance, in Luxembourg, since Malta's accession to the EU in 2004, has been re-appointed to serve for another six-year term.
- **8 September 2007** The two versions of the George Cross that were awarded to the Maltese people during World War II were on public display at the War Museum in Valletta, as part of the activities organised by Heritage Malta to mark Victory Day today.
- **8 September 2007** Provisional data for international trade shows that the visible trade gap in July 2007 stood at Lm56.3 million (€131.14 million), up by Lm7.2 million (€16.77 million) from the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 September 2007** A Maltese-Turkish Business Council was set up at the Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise in Valletta.
- **9 September 2007** Smart City, a new global company seeking to develop a worldwide network of self-sustained industry townships for knowledge-based companies based on the successful models of Dubai Internet City (DIC) and Dubai Media City, launched its global corporate identity at the DIC Community Zone at GITEX Technology Week 2007.
- **9 September 2007** Twenty-two NGOs and civil society organisations are currently taking part in an intensive training and technical assistance programme to learn how to plan, access and manage or become partners in EU Structural Fund projects, and the tools and skills required to successfully see projects through.
- **9 September 2007** University stipends will increase to Lm9 million (€20.96 million) from Lm8.2 million (€19.10 million), Education Minister Louis Galea said during the annual meeting organised by the National Students' Council for youths in Naxxar, Tarxien, Mellieha, St Paul's Bay, St Venera and Nadur.
- **10 September 2007** An agreement on the introduction of a common entrance examination for Church secondary schools and the government's Junior

Lyceums was getting closer, Education Minister Louis Galea said during a political activity.

- **10 September 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami and Foreign Minister Michael Frendo lead a Maltese delegation on a two-day visit to Algeria.
- **10 September 2007** Provisional estimates indicated that the gross domestic product (GDP) for the second quarter this year increased by 6% at market prices and by 3.7% in real terms when compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 September 2007** The master plan and model of SmartCity Malta were unveiled by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi in the presence of senior Tecom Investments executives at the Gitex Technology Fair in Dubai.
- **11 September 2007** MEP Simon Busuttil submitted two amendments to the EU 2008 budget calling for an increase in the EU's financial allocations for its external frontiers agency, Frontex.
- **11 September 2007** Juanito Camilleri was appointed chairman of the Malta Council for Science and Technology.
- **12 September 2007** Detention centres will be overseen by an independent board, along the lines of a prison board, by the end of the month, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said when contacted.
- **12 September 2007** Malta is at the forefront of research and experimentation on the breeding of amberjacks (accola), with a record 10,000 having been cultivated at the Aquaculture Section in Fort San Lucjan, Marsaxlokk, Environment Minister George Pullicino said.
- **12 September 2007** The President of Malta returned to Malta from Algeria. His visit there was the first by a Maltese head of state.
- **13 September 2007** Malta has posted the lowest rise in salaries and wages in the EU over the past year, Eurostat, the EU's statistical office said.
- **13 September 2007** A total of 152,326 Maltese residents travelled abroad by air or sea between January and July, an increase of 11.4% over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 September 2007** A collective agreement for employees of the Employment and Training Corporation was signed by the Union Haddiema Magħqudin, the union's public entities section confirmed.
- **13 September 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo and his Algerian counterpart Mourad Medelci signed memoranda of understanding for twice-yearly political consultations and for visa waiver for diplomatic and service passport holders between the two countries, during President Edward Fenech Adami's official visit to Algeria.
- **14 September 2007** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority approved the construction of a petrol station outside the development zones in an area described by its own staff as of "high landscape value".
- **14 September 2007** The Pandemic Preparedness Committee launched the Malta Influenza Pandemic Response Plan and a pandemic website. Further information can be found at www.pandemic.gov.mt
- **15 September 2007** The first consignment of Maltese euro coins arrived but the money, which will be in circulation from January 1, remained sealed in containers.
- **15 September 2007** A series of tombs and silos, probably dating back to the Bronze Age and early Roman period, have been discovered on the site set to

become the new US Embassy, in Ta' Qali, Cultural Superintendent Nathaniel Cutajar confirmed.

- **15 September 2007** The harmonised index of consumer prices rose by 0.5% last month, compared to July. The increase primarily reflected a rise of 2% in the restaurants and hotels index brought about by higher prices in accommodation services, the National Statistics Office said.
- **15 September 2007** Two EU teams of officials representing Schengen member states and the European Commission will shortly be inspecting the final preparations being made in Malta to satisfy the EU's borderless rules prior to their final recommendation by the beginning of 2008, a spokesman of the EU Inspection Team said while carrying out a verification visit in Malta last month.
- **15 September 2007** A temporary visitor centre was set up at the Ggantija Temples in Xaghra, Heritage Malta confirms.
- **15 September 2007** Heritage Malta and the Malta Standards Authority signed a collaboration agreement through which the authority will provide technical assistance in the environmental monitoring of the country's temples and museums, particularly the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum.
- **16 September 2007** Passenger movements in the first two weeks of this month were 16.4% higher than in the same period last year, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said during a dialogue meeting on tourism.
- **16 September 2007** Chris Cole was appointed chief operating officer (COO) of SmartCity Malta. His responsibilities include the establishment of the necessary business infrastructure and the development of relationships with key stakeholders, including the government, local and international business organisations, local communities and educational organisations.
- **16 September 2007** The Association of Private Family Doctors (APFD) entered into an agreement with the Department of Health under which private family doctors may vaccinate entitled patients against the annual influenza. The government would still provide the free vaccine.
- **17 September 2007** Trucks run by an experienced Italian contractor will be operating the transport of domestic waste from Gozo to Malta, using the same measures adopted in the rest of Europe, WasteServ said.
- **18 September 2007** The Cabinet approved a proposal by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi for the government to enter discussions over the funding of political parties.
- **18 September 2007** Work started to turn Ninu Cremona lyceum complex in Victoria into a state-of-the-art secondary school for boys.
- **18 September 2007** Maltese companies had until the end of this month to register with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as producers of waste packaging.
- **19 September 2007** EU Justice Ministers agreed to "examine further" Malta's proposal for burden sharing with regard to illegal immigration, in their first Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting under the Portuguese Presidency in Brussels.
- **19 September 2007** Lawyer Katrine Camilleri has won the prestigious UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award, whose previous winners include Eleanor Roosevelt, Médecins Sans Frontières and Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. The annual award is given to individuals or organisations that distinguish themselves in work on behalf of refugees.
- **19 September 2007** Malta has formally applied to tap the Globalisation Fund (EGF) created by the EU last year to help member states hit by substantial

redundancies due to the shifts in the global economy, a European Commission source said.

- **20 September 2007** A delegation from the Directorate General for Competition of the European Commission held talks with the government over the future of Malta Shipyards. A Commission source in Brussels said that the delegation had discussions with the Investments Ministry and with Malta Shipyards representatives.
- **20 September 2007** Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) lawyer Katrine Camilleri, who was awarded the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Nansen Refugee Award, received messages of congratulations from the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs and the Chamber of Advocates.
- **21 September 2007** The Constitution of Malta is to be amended so that when only two parties are elected to the House, parliamentary seats will be assigned strictly in proportion to the votes each party has won nationally, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg announced during a meeting of the House Business Committee.
- **21 September 2007** The Malta Historical Society, the country's oldest NGO for the propagation and dissemination of academic research on the island's history, appealed to the government and other parties to help it acquire centrally located premises as its headquarters.
- **21 September 2007** Tens of people, the majority of them tourists, crowded St John's Square to watch the country's dignitaries enter the Co-Cathedral for the annual Independence Day Thanksgiving Mass. To view photographs portraying this event please go to :
http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2007/09/ind.asp
- **23 September 2007** I.T. Minister Austin Gatt said the excellent results obtained by Malta in retaining its leading EU ranking in the quality of its e-Government services were not attained by coincidence or because other EU member states did not have the capacity to provide excellent e-Government.
- **23 September 2007** Environment Minister George Pullicino represented Malta at a high-level meeting on climate change organised by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York.
- **24 September 2007** The European Commission adopted a package of measures to protect the EU currency against counterfeiting. The main changes include an obligation on all commercial banks in the EU to ensure the authenticity of euro banknotes and coins before these are put back in circulation, Anti-fraud Commissioner Siim Kallas said.
- **24 September 2007** The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment, George Pullicino, participated in an informal European Council meeting for Agriculture Ministers in Oporto which debated a paper on The Future European Agricultural Model.
- **24 September 2007** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority's scheme to give financial assistance in the maintenance or replacement of old timber balconies was being extended to all localities in Malta and Gozo, Rural Affairs and Environment Minister George Pullicino has announced while addressing a Press Conference in Siggiewi.
- **24 September 2007** Parliament resumed after the Summer recess.
- **25 September 2007** Parking bays reserved for persons with disability can be used by all holders of the blue badge and it is not the policy of the transport authority to approve personalised reserved parking bays, Roads Minister Jesmond Muglietti said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **25 September 2007** The number of registered unemployed last month stood at 6,590, a drop of 582 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 September 2007** Thousands of pupils returned to school after the summer holidays as state schools and some Church and independent schools opened their doors at the start of the new scholastic year.
- **25 September 2007** Twelve European ministers, including nine whose countries will be joining the European Union's Schengen area, met in Malta "to compare notes and share experiences" ahead of the EU Council meeting in November which should give the go-ahead for Schengen's expansion.
- **26 September 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi left for New York to address the United Nations General Assembly.
- **26 September 2007** The Medical Association of Malta congratulated Katrine Camilleri on her award of the UNHCR's Nansen prize for 2007 for her work among refugees.
- **26 September 2007** The chairman of the University of Malta's Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), President Emeritus Guido de Marco was awarded a Jean Monnet Chair in the EU and Dialogue between People and Cultures.
- **26 September 2007** Malta and the Republic of Tajikistan established diplomatic relations with the purpose of promoting mutual understanding and strengthening friendship and co-operation.
- **27 September 2007** Constitutional amendments on the electoral system were unanimously approved by Parliament.
- **27 September 2007** Urban Development and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett inspected works on the final phase of Triq Tas-Sejba, Mqabba, built by the central government through an investment of Lm32,000 (€74,540).
- **28 September 2007** Malta believes that climate change and its repercussions must be addressed in a more cohesive and concerted manner by all the international institutions and organisations, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while addressing the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- **28 September 2007** Malta was one of the countries that stayed within its national tuna fishing quota as established by the EU in the past season, European Commission sources said.
- **28 September 2007** An estimated 825,874 tourists arrived in the first eight months of the year, implying an increase of 7.6 per cent over the corresponding period a year ago, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 September 2007** The government is developing plans to build a cruise liner quay on the outer part of the Mgarr breakwater in Gozo that would provide berthing facilities for 200-metre liners, Communications Minister Censu Galea said, speaking at the opening of a workshop at the Grand Hotel in Mgarr held by the Malta Maritime Authority in conjunction with the port authority of Catania.
- **29 September 2007** The current account deficit declined by Lm20.2 million, from a net negative balance of Lm47.5 million in the June 2006 quarter to Lm27.2 million in the corresponding period this year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 September 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first eight months of the year amounted to Lm70.5 million,

an increase of Lm1.3 million compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.

- **29 September 2007** Euro area annual inflation is expected to reach 2.1 per cent this month according to a flash estimate issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Communities.
- **29 September 2007** MEP Joseph Muscat urged the EU to insist with its member states, including Malta, that workers performing the same job should get the same pay while speaking during a debate at the European Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg on the 2007 Commission report on equality between men and women.
- **29 September 2007** MEP Simon Busuttil has called on the EU to act faster on requests being made by member states to gain assistance through the newly set-up European Globalisation Fund (EGF) and obtain help for redundant workers while speaking during a meeting of the European Parliament's Budget Committee in Brussels
- **30 September 2007** Heritage Malta's much awaited exhibition by the rebellious Italian baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio was inaugurated by President Eddward Fenech Adami.
- **30 September 2007** The EU ought to set up a framework to aid industrial development so that the EU would become a more attractive proposition job creation, said to Competitiveness Minister Censu Galea speaking in Brussels during a meeting of EU Competitiveness Ministers.
- **30 September 2007** The Lotteries and Gaming Authority (LGA) said yesterday that the publication on Friday of Legal Notice 271 of 2007 brings into effect the Video Lottery Terminals Regulations (VLT), under the Lotteries and Other Games Act, 2001.
- **30 September 2007** The Armed Forces of Malta are celebrating their 37th anniversary today by 'Trooping the Colour', a parade steeped in history and tradition.

OCTOBER

- **1 October 2007** Banners were unfurled showing the euro notes and coins Malta will be using from January 1 as the European anthem, Ode to Joy, was played, near the Central Bank in Castille Place, Valletta. The ceremony was presided over by the president of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, and by the governor of the Central Bank of Malta, Michael Bonello.
- **1 October 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami visited the Marsa power station and met employees as part of the activities organised by Enemalta Corporation to mark the corporation's 30th anniversary.
- **1 October 2007** The island's first underground bring-in site was opened in Zejtun. The Zejtun local council said the site has proved popular with the public.
- **2 October 2007** The government, over the coming month, will launch new incentives covering research and innovation, business advisors, start-ups, royalty financing, development of business networks, business development, the environment, SMEs and investment in Gozo, Investments Minister Austin Gatt told Parliament.
- **2 October 2007** The Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi gave notice of a motion for the appointment of a parliamentary commission to report to the House on

party funding and the introduction of a verifiable system to regulate financial donations to the political parties.

- **2 October 2007** Last month was one of the driest on record - only one other September in the past 30 years, that of 2004, was drier, according to the Met Office at the Malta International Airport (MIA).
- **2 October 2007** The Employment and Training Corporation and the European Employment Service (Eures) in Malta last week held European Job Days, in line with similar events organised in over 200 cities across Europe.
- **3 October 2007** Malta and 10 other member states obtained a two-year concession from the EU before being obliged to fully liberalise their postal services market, during an EU Telecoms Council held in Luxembourg.
- **3 October 2007** The total number of unemployed during the period April to June stood at 11,073 persons, the National Statistics Office said, quoting the Labour Force Survey.
- **3 October 2007** The Constitutional Committee of the European Parliament agreed on a new seat allocation for EU member states following the next parliamentary election in 2009, a European Parliament source said.
- **4 October 2007** The House of Representatives started debating a Bill to ratify ship boarding agreements reached with the United States, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo said.
- **4 October 2007** The government is spending Lm433,509 (€1009.80) on the embellishment of the Bulebel Industrial Estate, Industry Minister Austin Gatt said while answering a Parliamentary question.
- **5 October 2007** The House of Representatives unanimously approved amendments to the Malta Enterprise Act which will make that agency the administrator of incentives given to all forms of enterprise in Malta.
- **5 October 2007** The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) requested its chairman, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo, to visit Fiji to convey its concerns to the interim government on the current political situation in the country and report back to the group at its next meeting in Kampala next month.
- **5 October 2007** The Gozo Ministry launched a financial assistance scheme for NGOs and voluntary groups based in or operating in Gozo and that are members of the Association for Gozitan Non-Governmental Organisations. For more information, one may e-mail the association at ngocentregozo@gov.mt
- **5 October 2007** The sixth vertical strategic alliance was signed between the IT Ministry and ESRI, which designs and develops the world's leading geographic information system (GIS) technology, IT Minister Austin Gatt said.
- **6 October 2007** MEP Simon Busuttil was in Malta, as spokesman for the EPP-ED Group, for a series of meetings as the EU embarks on a crackdown of illegal employment of foreigners.
- **6 October 2007** The prices of another batch of medicines will be reduced following talks between the Consumer and Competition Division and various importers, the Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Censu Galea said.
- **7 October 2007** While speaking at a conference hosted by the Local Councils' Association, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said that the Committee on Local Law Enforcement was drawing up a disciplinary code for local wardens in consultation with interested parties.

- **7 October 2007** Ronnie Micallef who is 69 years of age and who distinguished himself for his services to young people undergoing drug treatment as well as their families, received the Elderly of the Year Award from President Edward Fenech Adami. The presentation ceremony was held at St Vincent de Paul Home on Friday. Those present included Health Minister Louis Deguara and Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care Helen D'Amato.
- **8 October 2007** Speaking during the launch of the two interactive CDs which were launched by AGENZIJA SEDQA as part of its prevention programmes in schools to help educate children and promote positive behaviour, Education Minister Louis Galea said it was vital for educators to embrace new interactive learning tools to better communicate with children.
- **9 October 2007** Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech represented Malta for the first time in the EU's eurogroup meeting in Luxembourg, an EU configuration of the member states forming part of the euro area.
- **9 October 2007** The 2007 International Congress of Maritime Museums was opened by Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech.
- **10 October 2007** The Committee of EU Permanent Representatives approved recommendations by the government for changes in the composition of the Maltese delegation on the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR).
- **10 October 2007** An agreement was reached between the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment and private slaughterhouses over the use of new equipment to be used at the slaughterhouses and the adherence to various EU safety directives.
- **10 October 2007** The House of Representatives started debating a Bill which Investments Minister Austin Gatt said was aimed at making the management structures of Enemalta and the Water Services Corporation more efficient.
- **10 October 2007** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 587 persons in June, when the registered unemployed decreased by 724 persons over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 October 2007** Public Investments Minister Austin Gatt said that the government would have spent Lm20 million (€46.59 million) by the end of this year to fund part of the surcharge on electricity. Should all the surcharge be transferred to consumers, it would rise from the current 52% to 82%, Dr Gatt said.
- **11 October 2007** The House of Representatives approved a motion by Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg setting out the budget debate timetable.
- **11 October 2007** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 0.81% last month, when the annual rate was 1.83%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 October 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami urged people not to shed their individual responsibility toward their sick relatives. Speaking at Mount Carmel Hospital during a ceremony to mark World Mental Health Day, Dr Fenech Adami said that in the past it was families who used to take care of the sick.
- **12 October 2007** Malta was assured of an additional MEP from 2009 onwards as the European Parliament gave its consent to a new distribution of seats between the EU's 27 member states.
- **12 October 2007** Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told *The Times* that the Data Protection Act may be amended to allow the police to obtain information from mobile phone companies about the location of people making mobile phone calls and sending text messages.

- **12 October 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami received Letters of Credence from Abolfazl Zohrevand, Ambassador of Iran, and Douglas Frederick Lawrence Markes, High Commissioner for New Zealand. Both ceremonies took place in the Ambassadors' Room at The Palace, Valletta.
- **12 October 2007** The Xghajra local council and the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology reached an agreement to collaborate over the challenges posed by the sewage purification plant and SmartCity Malta to the Xghajra community, Minister Austin Gatt said.
- **13 October 2007** Just over half the businesses responding to a survey by the National Euro Changeover Committee said they felt that, overall, the euro will have a positive impact while 13% expected it to be negative. The survey was conducted last August and September, and was released by NECC chairman Joe F.X. Zahra, who said the dual pricing system led to businesses getting used to the euro.
- **13 October 2007** The number of Maltese passengers leaving the island by air and sea between January and August amounted to 188,163, an increase of 12.1% over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 October 2007** Investments and IT Minister Austin Gatt welcomed the announcement by SmartCity Malta Ltd that it has started preparing the Ricasoli site for the development of SmartCity Malta.
- **14 October 2007** Competitiveness Minister Censu Galea said in a message for World Standards Day being marked today with the theme 'Standards and the Citizen: Contributing to Society' that the Malta Standards Authority established a reputation of how a standards body in a small country can be effective not only at national level but also at regional and international levels.
- **14 October 2007** Environment Minister George Pullicino and Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono launched the public consultation process for the development of a recreational park where the Qortin landfill once stood.
- **15 October 2007** Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg confirmed that a still unpublished final assessment report, drawn up by the European Commission a few days ago, gives the green light for Malta's entry into the Schengen borderless area as from the end of this year.
- **15 October 2007** The President and Mrs Fenech Adami made an official visit to St Paul's Bay. They heard Mass at the parish church and visited the local council, where Dr Fenech Adami described the seaside town as rich in environmental and historic treasures.
- **15 October 2007** The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Dr Lawrence Gonzi presented the budget for 2008.
- **16 October 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure for the first nine months of the year compared to the same period last year rose by Lm400,000 (€931749.36) and amounted to Lm73.3 million (€170.74 million), the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 October 2007** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 0.4% in September, when the annual rate stood at 0.9%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **17 October 2007** The House of Representatives approved a motion for the transfer of properties to the Society of Christian Doctrine (Museum) the Scout Association and Floriana Football Club.
- **17 October 2007** Households spent an estimated Lm221 million (€514.1 million) on food last year, the National Statistics Office said.

- **18 October 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, speaking at a business breakfast organised by MediaToday said that the government was evaluating proposals received from major international research companies interested in co-operating with Mater Dei Hospital.
- **18 October 2007** The number of pending court cases dropped by a quarter between 2004 and 2007, according to figures released by the Justice Ministry.
- **18 October 2007** Education and Employment Minister Louis Galea said that the Health and Safety Authority will be stepping up its enforcement action and will start to impose administrative fines. He was speaking in Parliament during the debate on the financial estimates of the authority.
- **18 October 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in Parliament that payments to Skanska in terms of the 'lump sum' agreement reached in April 2005 had reached Lm144.5 million (€336.59 million), which was almost Lm1 million (€2.33 million) below the agreed figure, however changes in legislation made after the agreement involved additional expenditure of Lm397,114.81 (€92502867.46).
- **18 October 2007** Provisional data for international trade show that the visible trade gap last August stood at Lm38.4 million (€89.45 million), down by Lm14.1 million (€32.84 million) from the same month of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **18 October 2007** The number of passengers using route buses has increased by 7.53% in the first nine months over the same period last year, Urban Development and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said during the launch of a newspaper named 'Kif?' which will be distributed free of charge on route buses.
- **19 October 2007** EU leaders started meeting for a two-day EU summit in Lisbon hoping to bring to a successful end an Intergovernmental Conference on a new treaty for the EU.
- **19 October 2007** A new day centre for senior citizens was opened in Qormi. The Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care, Helen D'Amato commented favourably about the cooperation between the Qormi local council and the government in bringing this project about.
- **19 October 2007** Speaking at the opening of the International Ship Suppliers Association (ISSA) Trade Exhibition at St Julians, Competitiveness Minister Censu Galea said Malta's cruise liner industry was set to break new records this year.
- **20 October 2007** MEP David Casa called the new EU treaty 'a historic milestone in the EU's history'. Mr Casa said the agreement will guarantee more transparency and more efficiency and will empower the citizens' voice in the EU. Arnold Cassola, Maltese MP in the Italian Parliament, said: 'I welcome the news that Malta has been formally given its sixth seat in the European Parliament'.
- **20 October 2007** Speaking during the presentation of a sponsorship cheque for Lm5,000 (€11,647) to the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) on the occasion of the Rolex Malta Middlesea Race, Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea said that the planned marina at Xemxija is expected to get the green light by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. On the other hand, talks will continue on the marina in Marsascala.
- **20 October 2007** MFA president Joe Mifsud, accompanied by Education and Sport Minister Louis Galea, together with members of the national football team, Brian Said, Jamie Pace, Roderick Briffa and Andrew Cohen, visited the

Lija-Balzan Primary School, St Elias School and St Edward's College to promote the message 'No To Racism One Community One Sport'.

- **20 October 2007** The total revenue from tax last year rose by Lm45 million (€104.82 million), or 6.5%, over the previous year, and amounted to Lm734.2 million (€1710.23 million), the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 October 2007** During the conference-exhibition of the International Ship Suppliers' Association (ISSA) in St Julian's, European Maritime Commissioner Joe Borg said he was optimistic that the new EU Integrated Maritime policy proposed by the Commission to EU member states would be adopted.
- **21 October 2007** Education Minister Louis Galea in a conference with the theme 'Uliedna Haqqhom L-Ahjar' ('Our children deserve the best') said the publication of a policy document in 2005 had ushered in a debate that eventually led to the adoption last year of the legal framework behind the 10 colleges.
- **22 October 2007** Environment Minister George Pullicino said that the agreement between the government and the five horticulture companies making up the Environment and Landscapes Consortium has been extended for another five years.
- **22 October 2007** Restoration work on the old chapel of St Luke, one of the oldest chapels in Zurrieq, is to be completed by the end of November, the Minister for Resources and Infrastructure Ninu Zammit said while speaking during a visit to the chapel which has been under restoration for the past 10 months.
- **22 October 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami and a number of ambassadors, consuls and other dignitaries paid respect to the airmen who lost their lives during the war during a ceremony which was held at the end of a three-day conference organised by the Maltese branch of the Royal Air Forces Association, which was attended by some 166 visitors from 19 countries.
- **23 October 2007** Commuters between Malta and Gozo in the third quarter of this year went up by 7.4%, reaching 1,305,710, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 October 2007** Preparations for the official opening of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean at Spinola Palace, St Julians, next month were discussed at a meeting between Anton Tabone, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Sergio Piazzi, secretary general of the Assembly.
- **24 October 2007** Just over a quarter of patients did not keep their appointments at the Outpatients' Department of St Luke's Hospital so far this year, Health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a Parliamentary question.
- **24 October 2007** This year, 244 persons were reported missing so far. All were traced except three foreigners, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg told Adrian Vassallo in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **24 October 2007** The Health Department owes medicine importers Lm8.6 million (€20.03 million), health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **24 October 2007** A total of 70 persons were found drink driving in the first nine months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg revealed yesterday in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **24 October 2007** Cruise traffic in September accounted for 64,473 passengers, a rise of 7.1% or 4,262 passengers over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

- **24 October 2007** Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity Dolores Cristina inaugurated a public garden named 'Gnien il-Familja' in Dingli.
- **25 October 2007** The number of registered unemployed stood at 6,629 last month, (5,988 in Malta and 641 in Gozo), a decrease of 555 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 October 2007** Speaking in Lisbon during the first ministerial meeting on the policy since its launch, Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea said Malta supports the initiatives suggested in the blueprint which will lead to the formulation of a Maritime Policy Action Plan for every member state.
- **26 October 2007** The government signed an agreement with the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses and a memorandum of understanding with the Union Haddiema Maghqudin, improving the working conditions, salaries and the status of several professions within the health sector.
- **26 October 2007** The number of nights spent in hotels and other tourist establishments in August rose by 12% over the same month last year. A total of 1,139,432 nights were spent in 'collective accommodation establishments', the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 October 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami was presented with Letters of Commission by George Mbanga Liswaniso, non-resident High Commissioner for Namibia. The ceremony took place in the Ambassadors' Room at The Palace, Valletta.
- **27 October 2007** Nadur is one of 10 European towns and villages that received the European Destinations of Excellence Award (Eden) for Best Emerging Rural Destination, a pilot project that is co-funded by the European Commission. The awards ceremony was held in the Algarve, Portugal, as part of the European Tourism Forum (ETF) 2007, the focus of which is Sustainable Management of European Destinations.
- **27 October 2007** Non-fatal accidents at work in the third quarter this year amounted to 1,179, a drop of 69, or 5.5%, when compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 October 2007** Malta has been recognised as one of the 21 most intelligent communities worldwide by the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF), which described the island as 'the surprise choice'. In drawing up the Smart21 community report for 2008, the ICF explained that although Malta was the smallest EU country, it supported an ICT industry of 200 companies and 6,000 workers.
- **29 October 2007** Malta's commitment towards alleviating poverty in less developed countries was crystallised in an Overseas Development Policy. The policy document was approved and launched by Cabinet to set out the principles on the basis of which Malta's development assistance is implemented.
- **29 October 2007** Malta Enterprise has launched a new eco innovation scheme under the European Regional Development Funds open to all enterprises engaged in manufacturing and related industrial services. This scheme will provide grants to enterprises investing in eco innovations by supporting investments in energy-saving and renewable energy sources, which may include wind, solar, biomass and biogases.
- **30 October 2007** An overwhelming majority - 250 out of less than 300 doctors - voted in a secret ballot in favour of an agreement on salaries and working conditions that had been negotiated between the Medical Association of Malta (MAM) and the government.

- **30 October 2007** Between January and September, 115 reports of child abuse over the internet were submitted to the Appogg Hotline service. This represents an average of 12.8 per month, marking a 'drastic' increase over the two per month between October and December last year, the agency said.
- **31 October 2007** Malta was found to be among 37 countries from around the world that were described as 'frontrunners' in terms of high foreign direct investment potential. According to the World Investment Report 2007, just released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Malta has also climbed up from the 10th to the sixth position between 2005 and 2006 when it comes to inward performance.
- **31 October 2007** Last month was a record September for tourism, according to the figures released. As the industry continues to boom, the National Statistics Office estimated the number of tourist departures in September at 143,698, a whopping 17.8% increase over the same month in 2006. This pushes the increase in the number of tourists for January-September up to 9% over the same period last year, with an estimated 969,572 having visited until the end of last month.

NOVEMBER

- **1 November 2007** The last containers bearing euro notes for Malta arrived and were delivered to the Central Bank and HSBC amid very tight security.
- **1 November 2007** Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, said that unemployment in Malta last September stood at 6.3%, unchanged from the previous two months.
- **2 November 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi attended a parade for the eighty-one new recruits who joined the ranks of the Armed Forces of Malta, at Luqa Barracks.
- **2 November 2007** The President's wife, Ms Mary Fenech Adami, launched *L-Istrina Piggy Bank* campaign at Dun Salv Vella Primary School, in Nadur, Gozo.
- **3 November 2007** Leading private sector representatives signed an agreement that should pave the way for a packaging waste recycling scheme to bring Malta in line with the EU's packaging waste directive that comes in full force in January. Environment Minister George Pullicino said that the agreement was an important step forward for waste recycling but was also significant because it brought the private sector together to deal with a common challenge.
- **3 November 2007** While speaking during one of her many visits to the Homeless Personalities Charity Event organised by YMCA in Republic Street, Valletta, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said she believed that shelters such as YMCA were essential.
- **4 November 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, who, together with IT Minister Austin Gatt and Parliamentary Secretary Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, visited the site of the demolition works at Ricasoli, which is to house the multi-million Smart City project, was told that the works are running ahead of schedule.

- **4 November 2007** Italian Ambassador Paolo Andrea Trabalza presented a unique collection of historical documents from the Italian Foreign Ministry, covering the period 1860 to the present day, to the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives including chairman Jason Azzopardi and historian Henry Frendo.
- **5 November 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo called for closer international collaboration on energy security and affordability and on climate change when he addressed the opening session of the EU-Africa-Middle East Energy Conference in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt.
- **5 November 2007** Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, Louis Galea inaugurated the new extension to the ETC Training Complex in Hal Far.
- **5 November 2007** The volume and wholesale value of fish landings at the fish market in the third quarter this year declined by 46.3% and 10.1% respectively compared to the same quarter last year, due to lower catches of the major species. The National Statistics Office said that in the July/September quarter this year, a total of 268,700 kilograms of fresh fish were landed.
- **6 November 2007** The House of Representatives started debating a Bill providing for the amalgamation of the Housing Authority, the Department of Social Housing and the Housing Construction and Maintenance Department. Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said these three social housing entities would be grouped in the Housing Authority to ensure smoother operations with less bureaucracy.
- **6 November 2007** The production of energy and issues of competitiveness were discussed at length during the conference organised by the Malta Federation of Industry. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said Malta needs to be linked to the European electricity grid but at the same time he did not discount the possibility of finding solutions to the provision of green energy.
- **7 November 2007** Speaking at a conference organised by the Marsascala Business Community, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said the government had identified Marsascala as one of the priority areas for the development of physical enhancement, along with St Paul's Bay and Pembroke.
- **7 November 2007** EU Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Commissioner Joe Borg started a six-day visit to China during which the recent initiatives taken by the Commission particularly in the maritime and fisheries sectors were discussed.
- **7 November 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Central Bank Governor Michael Bonello met in a bid to iron out differences over Lm250 - Lm300 million (€582.34 million - €698.81 million) in reserves, which the government is expecting the bank to release once Malta joins the Eurozone.
- **8 November 2007** Rural Affairs and Environment Minister George Pullicino launched a pilot project on environmental awareness targeted at students during the inauguration of a Maltese garden named 'Gnien Maria Tereza Spinelli' at St Monica School, in Gzira. He said the pilot project will be conducted by Nature Trust with the support of the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment and HSBC Bank Malta.
- **8 November 2007** The total expenditure on social security benefits in the first nine months of this year amounted to Lm183.9 million (€423.37 million), up by Lm9.5 million (€22.13 million) over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 November 2007** The government is taking the opportunity provided by euro adoption to change its debt structure and is considering a bond issue of up to

Lm128.79 million (€300 million) next year, Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech told Parliament.

- **9 November 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi unveiled a bust of Arvid Pardo, the 'Father of the Law of the Sea Conference', at the International Maritime Institute at the University of Malta.
- **9 November 2007** The government published the report for 2007 outlining the implementation of the National Reform Programme (NRP), which is one of the government's key strategic documents through which it addresses challenges linked to the country's socio-economic development. Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea said he was optimistic that the targets set in the National Reform Programme would be reached by 2008.
- **9 November 2007** Demand for electricity last summer reached a record of 434 Mw, an increase of 18% on the demand of five years ago, Investment, Industry and IT Minister Austin Gatt said, while speaking during the inauguration of a new 33kV distribution centre at Marsascala.
- **9 November 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami officially received three new ambassadors: Darko Uskokovic, Ambassador of Montenegro; Han Tae Song, Ambassador of North Korea; and Atanas Mladenov, Ambassador of Bulgaria. The ceremonies took place in the Ambassadors' Room at The Palace, Valletta.
- **10 November 2007** The Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology and Oli SpA, an Italian industrial manufacturing firm, announced that a new plant manufacturing industrial equipment will open in Malta in March. The agreement with the Investments Ministry was concluded following talks between Wamgroup chairman Vanier Marchesini and Minister Austin Gatt.
- **10 November 2007** The visible trade gap widened by Lm1.3 million (€3.03 million) in September when compared to September 2006 but narrowed by Lm71.8 million (€167.25 million) in the first nine months over the same period a year earlier, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 November 2007** Speaking during a press conference to launch the sale of the housing units, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina praised the success of the shared ownership scheme where a total of 331 units are to go on sale on a shared ownership basis as the Housing Authority broadens the spectrum of people eligible for shared ownership.
- **12 November 2007** While speaking during the debate on the Budget Measures Implementation Bill, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech told Parliament that tourist arrivals in October and the first 11 days of November had continued to grow on last year's figures.
- **12 November 2007** The first day of migration of in-patients to Mater Dei Hospital went smoothly, with 40 patients being transferred to the new hospital from St Luke's Hospital.
- **13 November 2007** Former Polish President and Solidarity trade union leader Lech Walesa was in Malta to promote Poland's bid to host Expo 2012 in the city of Wroclaw.
- **13 November 2007** Postal traffic totalled 12.9 million items in the third quarter of last year and the number of mobile telephone subscriptions reached 369,513, which roughly translates into 90.7% of the population, the National Statistics Office said.
- **14 November 2007** The police received 1,464 reports of thefts from cars in the first nine months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **14 November 2007** The full-time gainfully occupied population grew by 651 persons in June while unemployment dropped by 724 when compared to June 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **15 November 2007** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices rose by 0.1% last month over September to reach 105.92, the National Statistics Office said.
- **15 November 2007** Arnold Cassola, Maltese MP in the Italian Parliament, met Romanian Internal Affairs Minister Cristian David at a meeting which discussed financial crime
- **16 November 2007** The Casualty Department at St Luke's Hospital closed its doors after almost 60 years in operation as the one in Mater Dei started functioning.
- **16 November 2007** Minister for Family and Social Solidarity Dolores Cristina made an appeal for more families to become foster carers, saying fostering was one of the nicest things that could be done to give vulnerable youngsters the opportunity to be brought up in a family environment. She was speaking during the opening of a four-day international conference on foster care entitled 'Developing foster care for children and families in the European Union, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and North Africa - New challenges, quality standards and solutions', which was held at the Radisson SAS Golden Sands.
- **16 November 2007** German President Horst Köhler arrived in Malta for a two-day state visit with his wife. Following a formal ceremony of welcome outside the Presidential Palace in Valletta, Mr Köhler laid flowers at the war memorial in Floriana.
- **17 November 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi had an official luncheon with German President Horst Köhler where they discussed bilateral relations. Later the German President also met the Opposition leader.
- **18 November 2007** Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech confirmed that the low-fare airline Vueling Airlines will start operating between Malta and Madrid in April.
- **19 November 2007** The first babies were born at Mater Dei Hospital and received a blessing from Archbishop Paul Cremona. Their birth came just a few hours before Archbishop Paul Cremona blessed and toured the hospital with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **19 November 2007** Speaking at a conference organised by the European trade union organisation EUROFEDOP, hosted in Malta by the UHM, Maltese MEP Simon Busuttil called for an EU law to clarify patients' rights.
- **20 November 2007** A Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation was signed between the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies of the University of Malta and the Institute of Diplomatic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Ministry said the aims of the MoU are to establish and strengthen cooperation in the areas of information, research activities and training programmes and exchange documents, studies and expertise between the two parties. The MoU was signed in Riyadh by Malta's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Godwin Montanaro and Ambassador Saad A Al Ammar on behalf of the Saudi Foreign Affairs Ministry.
- **20 November 2007** Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Malta for an overnight stay that happened to coincide with her diamond wedding anniversary. She arrived with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, on a stopover en route to Uganda, where she paid a state visit to inaugurate the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

- **20 November 2007** Two new director generals were appointed in the two directorates within the new education system. Following a recently introduced law, the directorates replaced the Education Division that was set up in 1993.
- **20 November 2007** Speaking after a meeting with Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech and Finance Malta chairman Joseph Zammit Tabona at the Stock Exchange building in Valletta, American Ambassador Molly Bordonaro said that talks on the negotiation process on the double taxation agreement between the US and Malta are continuing.
- **21 November 2007** The number of traffic accidents rose by almost 5% in the third quarter of this year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 November 2007** During the United Nations International Children's Rights Day, Education Minister Louis Galea said that children are society's most precious treasure and that their interests should take priority in the drawing up of policies.
- **22 November 2007** Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt addressed a National Information Society Advisory Council meeting and presented the government's set of targets for the country's 2008-2010 ICT strategy.
- **22 November 2007** Cruise passenger traffic in Malta accounted for 58,186 persons last month, a decrease of 1,530, or 2.6% over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 November 2007** The number of reported traffic accidents in the third quarter this year reached 4,211, an increase of 198 cases or 4.9% the same quarter last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **23 November 2007** The 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was opened in Kampala, Uganda, with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi addressing the opening ceremony as the outgoing chairman of the Commonwealth.
- **23 November 2007** A programme of initiatives for the development of the Grand Harbour was announced by Industry Minister Austin Gatt after consultations with 60 organisations.
- **23 November 2007** Addressing a National Information Society Advisory Council meeting, Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt said that the attraction of 200 new companies to Malta, the creation of 4,000 new ICT-related jobs and the introduction of electronic identity cards were just three of the 182 targets proposed by the government in its ICT strategy for 2008-2010.
- **23 November 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami opened the headquarters of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), Spinola Palace, in St Julians, noting that the significant event signalled Malta's determination to persist in its Mediterranean vocation.
- **23 November 2007** The number of registered unemployed in October stood at 6,659, down by 512 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 November 2007** The Malta Tourism Authority has set up a committee made up of representatives of bodies working in the tourism sector to draw up a report with recommendations to the government for the improvement of the system for the teaching of English to foreign students, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said during his visit to the EF Language School in St Julians.
- **24 November 2007** The stock of licensed motor vehicles at the end of September rose by 2,388 to stand at 285,353, the National Statistics Office said.

- **25 November 2007** Concluding the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean's three-day meeting in Malta, its president Abdelwahed Radi said the assembly looked forward to preparing a charter for a new union for the region.
- **26 November 2007** A total of 812 babies were born to single mothers last year, including four to mothers aged under 15, Health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **26 November 2007** Admissions to Mt Carmel Hospital dropped by 10% to 1,100 over the past year thanks to better medical care and community services, Health Minister Louis Deguara said while speaking at the hospital, where he launched a new plan for mental health care.
- **26 November 2007** Occupancy in accommodation establishments went up by 10.4% in September compared to the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 November 2007** President Edward Fenech Adami ended an official two-day visit to Gharb. The President visited the Folklore Museum and the folkloristic group 'Tal-Qiegha', the Gharb Rangers Football Nursery and 'Ghaqda Muzikali Vizitazzjoni' during rehearsals.
- **27 November 2007** During a debate on a Bill to implement the Budget measures in Parliament, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said that despite calls for application, the government was not finding enough social workers and that this was a serious situation especially as the government wanted to further expand this sector.
- **27 November 2007** Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said the reformed children's allowance effectively means an investment of around Lm6.2 million (€14.44 million) extra annually. The Minister was speaking during the launch of a leaflet which will be distributed in every household and which includes a table of the allowance families will be eligible to, when considering the income and the number of children.
- **28 November 2007** Speaking at the end of the debate to make the measures in the 2008 effective, Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Finance Tonio Fenech mentioned the Malta Football Association's decision to review admission prices to its pitches as of next January. He said that if the price increases were not reversed the association would start being fined.
- **28 November 2007** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo, freshly back from the Uganda round of CHOGM talks among Commonwealth heads of government, spoke of the difficulty in enticing large countries such as India and Canada not to stand in the way of binding commitments for globally agreed action on reducing carbon emissions. The Minister was talking during a lecture organised by The Strickland Foundation.
- **28 November 2007** IT Minister Austin Gatt said that a foreign mobile virtual network operator is seeking to relocate all its business either to Malta, the United Kingdom or the US. He was addressing the 2007 Economic and Management Consultancy Services conference on the theme 'Working Smart in a Globalised World: SmartCity And Participation in the ICT Business'.
- **29 November 2007** The Christmas lights were switched on in Republic Street, Valletta, ushering in the busiest time of the year for the city's business community. Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech pressed the switch to light hundreds of bulbs in the presence of the members of the Republic Street Business Community Association (RSBCA).

- **29 November 2007** John Dalli was appointed consultant to the government on finance, industrial relations and related matters, the Prime Minister announced at a joint press conference with Mr Dalli.
- **29 November 2007** The Prime Minister presented the former editor of *The Sunday Times*, Lawrence Grech, with a gift in recognition of his work to develop and strengthen journalism.
- **29 November 2007** Resources Minister Ninu Zammit visited the construction works of an outdoor sports complex and a public garden at Zurrieq. The Minister said that the project has two main aims, the first to create an open space in an urban zone and the second to offer modern sports facilities that can be used by people of all ages.
- **30 November 2007** The government had a shortfall of Lm71.1 million (€165.6 million) between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first 10 months of this year, a drop of Lm2.1 million from the comparable period last year. The National Statistics Office said expenditure grew by Lm14.9 million (€34.71 million) while revenue increased Lm17 million (€39.60 million).
- **30 November 2007** Inbound tourism in October is estimated to have increased by 20.2% when compared to the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 November 2007** Speaking during the re-opening of a clinic in Attard, Health Minister Louis Deguara said that the Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care is in the process of drawing up a strategic plan to strengthen community and primary care. He also said that following the introduction of the Pharmacy Of Your choice Scheme, clinics' roles are to be redefined.

DECEMBER

- **1 December 2007** The government inaugurated the police detention centre at Hal Far, which has been refurbished with EU funds. Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said more was being done so that the country would be in a better position to host illegal immigrants.
- **1 December 2007** Maltese retailers started collecting their first euro kits, with Maltese euro coins, a month before Malta officially adopted the euro. Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech explained at a press conference at a Bank of Valletta branch in Attard that the kits were aimed at enabling retailers to give change on January 1, when the changeover was to occur.
- **1 December 2007** Tourist departures in October are estimated at 139,932, implying a rise of 20.2% over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 December 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first 10 months of this year amounted to Lm71.1 million (€165.6 million), representing a dip of Lm2.1 million (€4.89 million), the National Statistics Office said.
- **2 December 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi helped to apply the last layer of concrete for the senior citizens' home in Mellieha, which should receive its first residents within three months.
- **2 December 2007** The challenges faced by people with a disability were discussed during a conference organised by the National Commission for

Persons with a Disability (NCPD). Commission chairman Joseph Camilleri said that although big steps forward were made in the sector of disability during the past year, this area needed continuous work for more improvement.

- **2 December 2007** The President's wife, Ms Mary Fenech Adami, left for a four day visit to the UK where she visited Maltese patients recovering in hospitals. Ms Fenech Adami is the vice chairman of the Malta Community Chest Fund, which provides special medicine to patients suffering serious ailments.
- **3 December 2007** A wide-ranging Bill which came before Parliament will tighten existing laws against the sexual exploitation of children. Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg, who is piloting the debate, said the Bill would introduce in Maltese legislation various EU directives and international conventions against the sexual exploitation of children, trafficking in human beings and financing of terrorism.
- **3 December 2007** More than 56 kilometres of main and arterial road were built or rebuilt over the past five years, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said while visiting works on the road linking Paola to Tarxien.
- **4 December 2007** The National Euro Changeover Committee hooked up with the community in its final preparations for €-day as it inaugurated 59 new euro information centres, most of which will be placed in the parish centres across Malta and Gozo.
- **4 December 2007** The unemployment rate in Malta last October continued to fall for the 12th month in succession, registering 6.2%, according to Eurostat.
- **4 December 2007** Government income from VAT receipts amounted to Lm150 million (€349.41 million) during the year, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi told parliament in answer to a parliamentary question.
- **4 December 2007** Answering a parliamentary question, Employment Minister Louis Galea said that 109 men and 20 women were found to be working while registering for work.
- **4 December 2007** During a special parliamentary session organised as part of the World Disability Day celebrations at the Palace in Valletta, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said that while the aspirations of 20 years ago have become a reality, new challenges have been created. Environment Minister George Pullicino mentioned how needful it is that architects understand the importance of accessibility when they design buildings, and Education Minister Louis Galea said that a coordinator for inclusive education will be employed in each of the country's 10 colleges and that a special curriculum for students with a disability will also be designed.
- **5 December 2007** The House of Representatives approved the financial estimates of the Malta Maritime Authority after a debate in which the Minister for Competitiveness and Communications, Censu Galea, highlighted the increased activity at the Grand Harbour.
- **6 December 2007** Meat production increased by volume and value in the third quarter of the year. Volume was up by 5.5% and value by 1.7%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **7 December 2007** The Malta Tourism Authority held a seminar on its strategy for 2008-2010 against what Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said was a background of positive results and achievements.
- **7 December 2007** The EU justice ministers meeting in Brussels gave the official green light to Malta and another eight EU member states to start forming part of the EU's borderless area, known as the Schengen Area. Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said that this new step, together with the introduction of the euro, would fully integrate Malta into the European Union.

- **8 December 2007** Provisional estimates indicate that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the third quarter of this year, when compared to the same period last year, increased by 6.5% at market prices and by 4.1% in real terms, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 December 2007** Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, won the fourth edition of the Junior Chamber International (Malta's) The Outstanding Young Person of the Year Award (TOYP).
- **9 December 2007** Attending the closing session of the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon, in representation of the Prime Minister, who spoke at the summit and returned to Malta, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo said this was 'a new beginning in EU-Africa relations after a seven year gap from the Cairo Summit in 2000'.
- **9 December 2007** Just 16%, or 560, of the 3,500 vehicles inspected by the Malta Transport Authority for harmful emissions have failed the test, statistics obtained by a local newspaper have shown.
- **10 December 2007** The visible trade gap widened by Lm6.6 million (€15.4 million) in October 2007, when compared to October 2006, as a result of a drop in exports, the National Statistics Office reported.
- **10 December 2007** Education Minister Louis Galea inaugurated a new building housing the MCAST Institute for Community Services at Corradino.
- **11 December 2007** More than 14,000 euro starter kits were bought by businesses from banks since the beginning of December, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Finance Ministry, Tonio Fenech said, during the launch of the starter kits for consumers.
- **11 December 2007** Professor Kenneth Wain was appointed Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations by Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina, as the recently enacted Voluntary Organisations Bill came into force.
- **12 December 2007** Minister for Resources and Infrastructure Ninu Zammit and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated the Merchants Street and St John Street regeneration project.
- **12 December 2007** The National Statistics Office confirmed a sharp rise in the price of fruit and vegetables in the third quarter of this year. It also reported a rise of 7.8% in the price of animal feed, and an increase of 4.6% in maintenance costs.
- **13 December 2007** European Union leaders gathered in Lisbon and signed the new EU treaty. At the ceremony, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Foreign Minister Michael Frendo signed the treaty on behalf of Malta.
- **13 December 2007** The waste incineration plant in Marsa, also known as the thermal treatment facility, was inaugurated by George Pullicino, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment, in the presence of Guido Tampieri, the Italian Undersecretary at the Ministry of Agriculture.
- **14 December 2007** A consultation process which will lead to a national strategy on e-learning was launched by IT minister Austin Gatt and Education Minister Louis Galea.
- **14 December 2007** The Retail Price Index increased to 113.50 from 113.20 in October, the National Statistics Office said.
- **14 December 2007** The number of Maltese passengers departing by air and sea in the first 10 months of this year amounted to 234,824, an increase of 8.3% over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.

- **15 December 2007** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1.04% in November, when the annual rate was 3.29%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 December 2007** For the first time in the history of the island's wine production, 17 types of wine by five local producers can now be labelled 100-per-cent Maltese, from Malta-grown grapes, following their DOK ('Denominazzjoni ta' Origini Kontrollata') certification. Speaking at an event to celebrate the 'historical moment in the field of wine production in Malta' at the Upper Barrakka Gardens in Valletta, Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said this meant that consumers could rest assured that they were drinking wine produced in accordance with the world's highest certification systems and was, therefore, of high quality.
- **17 December 2007** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated an 18th century Neopolitan crib by Fr Edgar Vella at Castille in Valletta.
- **18 December 2007** The Ministry for the Environment and Rural Affairs said that the Christmas Village put up at Ta' Qali was a success and will become an annual event.
- **19 December 2007** The Malta Maritime Authority and the Malta Maritime Pilots Cooperative concluded a new agreement on harbour pilots, ending an issue which had led to industrial action. The agreement provides for further streamlining of the tariff system and transfers responsibilities for the provision of pilot launch services to the Malta Maritime Pilots.
- **21 December 2007** The number of registered unemployed stood at 6,623 last month, a drop of 710 from November 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 December 2007** Cruise liners carried 57,366 passengers to Malta last month, an increase of 18,587, or 47.9% over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 December 2007** The Prime Minister and IT Minister Austin Gatt launched the government's Information Technology strategy 2008-2010, saying they wanted Malta to be transformed into a 'smart island' and be among 'the best in the world'. The strategy itself is called The Smart Island.
- **22 December 2007** The registered unemployment rate stood at 4.3% of the labour supply in July, the National Statistics Office said.
- **23 December 2007** During an official ceremony in Berne, attended by ministers from the new EU member states, Foreign Minister Michael Frendo signed a bilateral framework agreement with the Swiss Federal Council through which Malta will receive the sum of CHF 2.9 million, equivalent to Lm0.77 million (€1.8 million), to be used for projects in the health sector.
- **23 December 2007** The President and Mrs Fenech Adami, the Prime Minister and Mrs Gonzi, Archbishop Paul Cremona, and Opposition leader Alfred Sant, came together to project a unified message that Christmas was a time for the Maltese to espouse values of family and solidarity.
- **26 December 2007** Occupancy in hotels and other 'collective accommodation establishments' went up by 7.6% in October 2007 when compared to the same month a year earlier, to stand at 64.2%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 December 2007** Archbishop Paul Cremona visited the prisons at Corradino and celebrated Mass at the prison chapel where he stressed that every persons has his dignity which has to be respected.

- **27 December 2007** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 914 persons in July while unemployment decreased by 748 when compared to July 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 December 2007** Malta's current account balance improved by Lm8.6 million (€20.1 million) in the third quarter over the same period last year to reach a net surplus of Lm20.9 million (€48.7 million), the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 December 2007** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first 11 months of this year stood at Lm82 million (€190.9 million), an increase of Lm2 million (€4.66 million) over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 December 2007** Former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **31 December 2007** According to the ongoing frontier survey, tourist departures in November 2007 are estimated at 82,474, implying an increase of 15.3% over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **31 December 2007** The EU member states gave their approval to the implementation of Malta's Rural Development Plan (RDP) which will see an investment of Lm42.93 million (€100 million) until 2013. This will be the largest ever investment in the agriculture sector, with the 76% of the funds, equivalent to Lm32.88 million (€76.6 million), coming out of EU coffers.

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