

DOI DIRECT MAILING SERVICES DIARY OF EVENTS

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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

1 January 2008 The Prime Minister, the Governor of the Central Bank and scores of people withdrew the first euro notes from ATMs as Malta adopted the euro. This marked the end of an intensive 40-month period to make Malta eligible for adoption of the European currency. It also marked the proper beginning of Malta's participation as the smallest country in the eurozone.

- **1 January 2008** Archbishop Paul Cremona and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi both expressed the hope that the Church and the state would continue to work together in the coming year to spread and promote Christian values while addressing the Cabinet at the Archbishop's Palace in Valletta where, according to tradition, personalities met to exchange New Year's greetings.
- **1 January 2008** This year should be a time in which the country consolidates what it has achieved so far, President Edward Fenech Adami said at the traditional exchange of greetings. He was speaking to MPs at the Palace in Valletta, shortly after having received the Prime Minister and before meeting a long line of well-wishers that included members of the public.
- **1 January 2008** Figures released by the National Statistics Office show a 15.3% increase in tourist arrivals in November compared to the same month in 2006 and a 10.6% increase in the January to November 2007 period.
- **2 January 2008** The Malta Communications Authority (MCA), together with the representatives from the communications industry, presented the generous sum of €1180.41 (Lm506.75) to the *Razzett tal-Hbiberija*.
- **2 January 2008** The two major commercial banks, HSBC and Bank of Valletta, reported that over €2.4 million (Lm1.03 million) were withdrawn from ATMs across Malta and Gozo between midnight and late afternoon. The figure was 10 times the typical ATM usage for the same period in previous years, the banks said.
- **3 January 2008** While launching a process to update the curriculum, Education Minister Louis Galea said that an updated educational curriculum will have to address a number of new challenges including the declining attention span of students.
- **3 January 2008** Former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, who also presided over the European Convention on the Future of Europe during 2002 and 2003, met Foreign Minister Michael Frendo and exchanged views on the Reform Treaty and future developments in the European Union.
- **4 January 2008** A memorandum of understanding was signed in a ceremony that was held at Castille, in the presence of Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. The Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise and the Federation of Industry

agreed to a roadmap that should see them eventually merging into a stronger employers' body.

- **5 January 2008** The NECC (North East Chamber of Commerce) said that since January 1 the Maltese had made 135,000 ATM transactions, drawing €15.5 million (Lm6.65 million) while 108,000 transactions were made in bank branches for a total of €68.1 million (Lm29.24 million).
- **5 January 2008** The total amount of rainfall that fell last month - 206.8mm - exceeded the average for the month since 1922 by over 103.9mm, the Meteorological Office said.
- **6 January 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Environment Minister George Pullicino visited the Sant'Antnin Waste Recycling Plant in Marsascala, which will be tested and commissioned in the coming days.
- **7 January 2008** Speaking at the opening of a seminar for farmers who produce tomatoes, Rural Affairs and Environment Minister George Pullicino said the tomato processing sector offered possibilities for farmers and processors and that it would remain important to the country.
- **8 January 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 2,227 while unemployment decreased by 582 in August 2007, when compared to August 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 January 2008** Speaking at the launch of a bus shelter campaign, involving posters with a message to stop domestic violence against women, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said domestic violence needed to be focused on, particularly violence against the elderly and children, who raised their voices even less than other victims.
- **9 January 2008** Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina told Parliament that the new legislation to regulate adoptions was focused on safeguarding the interests of the children.
- **9 January 2008** The visible trade gap widened by €51.5 million (Lm2.21 million) in November 2007 when compared to November 2006, the National Statistics Office said. Provisional data for international trade shows that the visible trade gap in November 2007 stood at €93.6 million (Lm40.18 million), up by €51.5 million (Lm22.11 million) from the same month the previous year.
- **10 January 2008** IT minister Austin Gatt said at a press conference that families that do not have broadband at home will be able to acquire a broadband internet package for just €3 (Lm1.29) per month under the 'Blue Skies Scheme', which is in line with the IT strategy launched by the government a few weeks ago, which was based on the principle that no one should be left out of the Maltese information society.
- **11 January 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva.
- **12 January 2008** New regulations to ensure the quality of further and higher education institutions will be in place by the end of next month, Education Minister Louis Galea said. A set of proposals have been drawn up by the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) which recommended the introduction of rigorous verification, inspection, accreditation and proper licensing for these institutions.
- **12 January 2008** Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett visited the works being carried out on Canon Road, Sta Venera and said that the Malta Transport Authority is spending €372,700 (Lm160,000) to carry out permanent repairs on a number of arterial and distributory roads that were extensively damaged by heavy rainfall towards the end of last year.

- **12 January 2008** Various foreign dignitaries and delegations attended the official euro adoption celebrations to welcome Malta's new membership of the eurozone. The celebrations started with a state lunch and included a concert by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, in Valletta. The dignitaries included the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso; the president of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet; the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Joaquín Almunia; Maltese European Commissioner Joe Borg; the vice president of the European Parliament, Mario Mauro; European Council president Dimitrij Rupel (Slovenia's Foreign Minister); the president of the Euro Group, Jean-Claude Juncker (Prime Minister of Luxembourg) and the Prime Ministers of Italy, Slovakia and Belgium, Romano Prodi, Robert Fico and Guy Verhofstadt, respectively.
- **13 January 2008** Foreign Minister Michael Frendo discussed illegal immigration and renewable energy with Dutch European Affairs Minister Frans Timmermans. Mr Timmermans was in Malta for the euro adoption celebrations.
- **13 January 2008** Malta and Greece signed an agreement through which both countries pledged to work together in search and rescue missions and for personnel from both countries to carry out training activities together. The agreement was signed by Foreign Affairs Minister Michael Frendo and Greek Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Yannis Valinakis at Palazzo Parisio in Valletta.
- **14 January 2008** The number of Maltese going abroad grew by a fifth in November when compared to the same month in 2006, figures given by the National Statistics Office show.
- **14 January 2008** Education Minister Louis Galea attended the World Ministerial Seminar on *Technology in Education - Focus on the Digital Divide within Countries and between Countries*, in London.
- **15 January 2008** Airport passenger movements in the first two weeks of this year grew by 12.35% over the same period last year, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said on a local radio station.
- **15 January 2008** CMA CGM, a world wide leading container shipping group, invested €130 million (Lm55.77 million) on an extension of Malta Freeport and will create 500 new jobs within five years, Public Investments and IT Minister Austin Gatt announced after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.
- **15 January 2008** President Edward Fenech Adami received a courtesy call from ex-King Simeon of Bulgaria at The Palace, Valletta.
- **16 January 2008** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices increased to 103.69 in December from 103.62 in November, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 January 2008** A total of 1,275 persons were caught by the police smoking in public places last year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 January 2008** Sixty-one children aged between 12 and 16 were arraigned before the Juvenile Court in Malta and 20 in Gozo last year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 January 2008** The Park and Ride Shuttle Service had an estimated patronage of 20,653 persons between November 2006 and the end of last year, Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 January 2008** There were 112 prisoners who were caught under the effect of drugs last year, Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **16 January 2008** The number of foreign students attending English language courses in 2006 increased by 7.1% over the previous year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 January 2008** The recently appointed CEO of Malta International Airport Plc, Julian Jaeger, paid a courtesy visit on Competitiveness and Communications Minister Ċensu Galea. Various issues including recent positive increases in passenger numbers and the efforts to develop new air routes, were discussed.
- **17 January 2008** The government has formed an 'e-government alliance' with 14 software development companies to develop and commission 40 new e-government services. The alliance was announced by IT Minister Austin Gatt who said that the government's ultimate target is for Malta to be the leading European country in the provision of e-government services.
- **17 January 2008** Malta in 2007 exceeded its cruise passenger traffic projections for the year with a month to spare, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech told the 'Seatrade Winter Cruising Forum' during the two day meeting entitled 'Winter Cruising: Its current scope and future potential'.
- **17 January 2008** More than 700 full-time students have been trained in academies that the government set up in partnership with a number of multinational information and communications technology companies, IT Minister Austin Gatt said. The minister was speaking at the inauguration of an academy of the IT company SAP at the Malta College for Art, Science and Technology's business and commerce institute.
- **18 January 2008** Data released by Eurostat shows that the first estimate for the euro area (EA13) trade balance with the rest of the world in November 2007 indicated a €2.6 billion (Lm1.12 billion) surplus, compared with a €5.2 billion (Lm2.23 billion) surplus a year earlier.
- **18 January 2008** The government entered into an alliance with 14 private IT firms to expand its e-government facilities with another 40 services within just over a year. The idea is not simply to include more facilities, IT Minister Austin Gatt said at the launch of what is being called the e-government alliance, but to have installed more sophisticated, second-generation systems that allow a greater degree of interactivity and personalisation.
- **19 January 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi formally inaugurated a new waste water plant at Ras il-Hobz, near Ghajnsielem in Gozo.
- **19 January 2008** The figures indicate that last year Gozo enjoyed its best year for tourism, Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono told the annual general meeting of the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA). She said that figures released by the National Statistics Office for the 10-month period of January-October 2007 show that when compared to the same period in 2003, Gozo registered an increase of 11,300 tourists and an increase of 20,200 bed nights.
- **20 January 2008** Gozo's odourless €7.2 million (Lm3.09 million) sewage treatment plant, which will replace the island's four sewage outflows, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **20 January 2008** SmartCity Malta held its first board of directors' meeting of 2008. The meeting discussed the future course of action concerning the implementation of the SmartCity Malta project, the 2008 marketing plan and budget, and the next level of synergy development between the Government of Malta and SmartCity in promoting Malta as an IT destination.
- **21 January 2008** The National Family Commission (NFC) and the St Jeanne Antide Foundation signed an agreement to embark on a joint project aimed at empowering people in two selected localities by helping them reach their

full potential. The project will bring about social renewal in the localities and follows the success of a pilot project initiated last year on residents of a housing estate in Taç-Ċawla, Victoria, Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said.

- **23 January 2008** Investigations by the Benefit Fraud Directorate last year revealed 1,045 cases of social benefit abuse, Social Policy Minister Dolores Cristina said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **23 January 2008** Unemployment in December dropped by 989 to 6,172 when compared to the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 January 2008** The Retail Price Index rose to 113.52 in December from 113.50 in November, the National Statistics Office said. The increase primarily reflected an increase of 0.42% in the Transport and Communications Index, caused by higher prices of air transport services and fuels and a 0.41% increase in the Clothing and Footwear Index, mainly on account of higher prices of female outerwear.
- **24 January 2008** Total cruise passenger traffic last year amounted to 488,170, an increase of 19.6% over 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 January 2008** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1.25% in December whereas the annual rate stood at 3.31%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 January 2008** Hotel occupancy and bed nights increased in November compared to the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said. The overall occupancy rate in collective accommodation establishments went up by 5.3 percentage points in November 2007 when compared to the same month a year earlier, to stand at 46.5%.
- **26 January 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi toured the former Maghtab dump to witness the planting of hundreds of trees as part of the rehabilitation process. During his visit Dr Gonzi was presented with a cheque for €30,000 (Lm12,879) for the rehabilitation process by HSBC.
- **28 January 2008** There are 3,320 pending applications for graves at the Addolorata Cemetery, Health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **28 January 2008** There were a total of 4,557 applications for the Blueskies broadband internet scheme over the weekend, IT minister Austin Gatt told a press conference.
- **28 January 2008** Official figures issued by the National Statistics Office confirm a 10.9% increase in tourist arrivals in December and a 10.6% increase for the whole year when compared to 2006.
- **29 January 2008** The volume and wholesale value of fish landings at the fish market declined by 33.7% and 10.4% respectively in the last quarter of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 January 2008** A total of 1,243,510 tourists are estimated to have visited Malta last year, a rise of 10.6% over 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 January 2008** A total of 27 suicides were registered last year, Health Minister Louis Deguara said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **29 January 2008** The number of commuters between Malta and Gozo increased by 1.7% in the fourth quarter last year, reaching 785,835, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 January 2008** Non-fatal workplace accidents dropped by 4.5% to 979 in the last quarter of 2007 when compared to the same quarter in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 January 2008** Fish landings declined by more than a third in volume last year over the year before. The National Statistics Office said a total of 848,682 kilogrammes, a drop of 34.5%, were landed at the fish market in 2007.
- **31 January 2008** Chai Xi, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech inaugurated the 2008 Valletta Chinese Spring Festival at Freedom Square, Valletta.
- **31 January 2008** Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina inaugurated a new day centre for persons with disability at Paola.

FEBRUARY

- **1 February 2008** The stock of motor vehicles rose by 1,767 in the fourth quarter of 2007 as the number of newly-registered vehicles continued to outstrip the number of vehicles taken off the roads, official figures showed.
- **2 February 2008** Official figures showed that the stock of licensed motor vehicles in the quarter ending in December stood at 287,120, an increase of 1,767 over the September quarter. More than three quarters of the stock, or 76.1%, were private vehicles while commercial vehicles accounted for 16.3%.
- **2 February 2008** Staying on the alert in an unstable international financial situation and the need to encourage young people to pursue a career in financial services are two of the main challenges facing Malta's financial sector, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking at the start of a meeting with officials of the Malta Union of Bank Employees in Valletta.
- **2 February 2008** Drug victims undergoing a drug rehabilitation residential programme as part of their prison sentence will be given a weekly allowance, Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina said. Speaking during the launch of the National Drugs Policy, Ms Cristina also announced that her ministry will be giving Caritas close to €70,000 for its harm-reduction shelter while the Housing Authority will be renting out two apartments on behalf of Caritas for the use of young people who have just finished a rehabilitation programme.
- **3 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi laid the foundation stone of a new boys' school being built at Victoria. He visited the building in Victoria, which forms part of a new college, after touring works on a new college in Cospicua earlier in the day.
- **4 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi presided over the last Cabinet meeting of this legislature. Afterwards he asked President Edward Fenech Adami to dissolve Parliament and also made a courtesy call on the Speaker, Mr Anton Tabone.
- **4 February 2008** During a Press Conference, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi announced the date of the general elections which will coincide with the

local council elections in 23 localities of Malta. Both will take place on the 8th of March 2008.

- **4 February 2008** The government granted CMA CGM, the world's third largest container shipping company, an extension of its terminal concession held through its subsidiary Malta Freeport Terminals Ltd. at Marsaxlokk. The agreement was signed by Austin Gatt, Minister for Investments, Industry and IT, and CMA CGM President J.R. Saadé, in an official ceremony attended by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi
- **5 February 2008** At a press conference with the GRTU director-general, IT minister Austin Gatt announced that the government is to give tax credits of up to €12,000 to small businesses which upgrade their IT systems to develop e-commerce.
- **5 February 2008** Foreign direct investment amounted to €642.6 million during the first nine months of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **5 February 2008** The government will be introducing a door-to-door collection scheme for separated recyclable packaging waste in all localities from April 1, Environment Minister George Pullicino announced. Mr Pullicino was speaking during the BOV Environment Seminar held at the San Gorg Corinthia Hotel in St Julians.
- **6 February 2008** A €22 million e-learning project was launched by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, who said that the aim is for every four students in state schools to have access to a computer in class. Details of the project were given by Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt at a press conference held at Margaret Mortimer Junior Lyceum in Sta. Lucia, which was also attended by Education Minister Louis Galea.
- **6 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi visited the Freeport together with Investments Minister Austin Gatt.
- **7 February 2008** The government introduced the EURO-Label certification mechanism in an effort to boost e-commerce. IT Minister Austin Gatt said the system had been set up in association with the Chamber of Commerce to instil confidence in electronic commerce around Europe.
- **7 February 2008** Malta International Airport saw a 23% increase in passenger movements last month when compared to January 2007. Passenger movements increased by 29,437 from 127,003 in 2007 to 156,440 last month.
- **8 February 2008** A policy on teleworking in the public sector was launched by Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina during a meeting with the permanent secretaries.
- **9 February 2008** The rising price of cereals has led to the price of poultry products in other countries to go up by between 20% and 30% while those in Malta remained stable, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi was told during a tour of poultry producing plant *Valle del Miele*.
- **9 February 2008** During a press conference at St James Cavalier in Valletta about the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech described how through a variety of events the public will be invited to explore different cultures through their five senses.

- **9 February 2008** The volume of fresh fruit and vegetables in the fourth quarter of 2007 declined by 11.1% over the same period a year earlier and the wholesale value rose by 21.6%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 February 2008** The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) of the Sant' Antnin Waste treatment plant was inaugurated by Environment Minister George Pullicino. Mr Pullicino said this event was a milestone for Malta's waste policy because this part of the plant was crucial to increasing the amount of recyclable waste.
- **10 February 2008** The values and principles on which the Scouts movement was built are needed more than ever before, Education Minister Louis Galea said during a seminar on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Scouts in Malta.
- **11 February 2008** Ministers and representatives from 42 EU and Arab League countries met in Malta in the first ever high-level meeting between the two organisations. Heading the delegations were Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa and EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero Waldner.
- **11 February 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 2,197 persons in September while unemployment decreased by 555 when compared to September 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **12 February 2008** Malta signed agreements with Cyprus and Palestine on cooperation between their foreign ministries. The agreements were signed on the fringes of the EU-Arab League meeting in Malta.
- **12 February 2008** The number of reported traffic accidents in the fourth quarter of last year reached 4,027, an increase of 310 or 8.3% over the corresponding quarter in the preceding year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **12 February 2008** The government launched a scheme enabling students, teachers and people with a disability to buy the office software suite StarOffice 8 for just €2.
- **13 February 2008** Fourteen people died in road accidents last year, four more than in 2006, according to data supplied by the National Statistics Office.
- **13 February 2008** Air Malta boosted its passenger numbers by 9% in the six months between August 2007 and January 2008 over the same period a year before, carrying about 60,000 more passengers.
- **14 February 2008** The number of Maltese who went abroad in December grew by 5.1% over December 2006 to reach 25,038, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 20,525 travelled to European Union destinations.
- **14 February 2008** Unemployment in September last year fell by 555 persons when compared to September 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **14 February 2008** Several voluntary organisations working in the sphere of social inclusion were granted a total of €2,026,555 by the Family and Social Solidarity Ministry. Family and Social Solidarity Minister Dolores Cristina

presented the cheques to the organisations, saying that during the last legislature more than €8.9 million had been invested in assistance to voluntary organisations.

- **15 February 2008** A census carried out in February last year showed that 338 agricultural holdings had a total of 1,168 greenhouse structures with a combined surface area of 59.5 hectares, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 February 2008** Malta's first skate park was inaugurated by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi at Tal-Qroqq roundabout. Dr Gonzi remarked that the site was ideal for young people in that it was close to the University and the Junior College.
- **18 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi toured restoration works on a section of the Mdina bastions near Vilhena Palace.
- **19 February 2008** Investment Minister Austin Gatt told a press conference that the government would be allocating €213 million over a period of five years for business incentives.
- **19 February 2008** During the launch of the Smart Women programme at the Hilton in St Julians Investment and Information Technology Minister Austin Gatt explained how this programme will provide free training in information and communication technology (ICT) at different levels, as well as childcare facilities, also free of charge.
- **20 February 2008** The Retail Price Index dropped to 112.42 from 113.52 in December 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **20 February 2008** 29.5 million tons of shipping have been registered under the Maltese merchant flag, a record since the Maltese shipping register was established in 1973, Communications Minister Censu Galea announced.
- **21 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated the new Gozo harbour terminal at Mgarr which will make it possible for passengers to embark and disembark from the ferries separately from the cars.
- **21 February 2008** Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea said that Malta's maritime register has hit an all-time high since it was created in 1973 and now covers 29.5 million tonnes.
- **22 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated two main roads in Gozo which have been rebuilt thanks to EU funds. Mgarr Road, from Mgarr to Victoria, was financed by the EU's Cohesion Funds while San Lawrenz Road, from Victoria to San Lawrenz, was financed by the European Research and Development Fund. Together, the newly-built five kilometres of road cost €11.9 million. The roads were inaugurated in the presence of Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono and Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett.
- **22 February 2008** Unemployment in January fell by 845 to 6,463 persons when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 February 2008** A total of 2,277 new jobs were created in the tourism industry between 2005 and August last year, Tourism Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said during the presentation of the STAR Awards in tourism for 2007.

- **23 February 2008** Government Investments Minister Austin Gatt visited Malta's longest underground tunnel, a newly dug eight-kilometre long gallery linking Enemalta's Marsa distribution centre to the Delimara power station.
- **24 February 2008** The IT Ministry entered into an agreement with the Foundation for IT Accessibility and the National Commission for Persons with Disability, as part of its goal to achieve The Smart Island, a society where everybody has access to IT. IT Minister Austin Gatt said that 'This agreement renews the Government's commitment that an information society includes persons with disabilities and provides them with the key to lead a full life'.
- **25 February 2008** Cruise passenger traffic in January rose by 795 over January 2007 to reach 2,193, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 February 2008** While inaugurating a health clinic in Żurrieq, Health Minister Louis Deguara said that community care is the fulcrum of health services, with health centres and health clinics having an important role since they are close to the patient.
- **26 February 2008** In a bid to combat cyber exploitation of children, IT Minister Austin Gatt announced an intensive awareness campaign as students marked Safer Internet Day. Attending an event organised by Aġenzija Appoġġ at the Playmobil Funpark in Ħal Far, Dr Gatt said that while children's education was sacred for the government, so was their security.
- **27 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated the first Crafts Incubation Centre in Gozo and stressed the importance of investment in human resources.
- **27 February 2008** Microsoft Malta Ltd donated €55,171 to the Maltese government. The donation, consisting in software worth €24,137 and a cash donation of €31,034, was presented by the Country Manager of Microsoft Malta Ltd Pierre Mallia to the Minister for Investment, Industry and Information Technology, Austin Gatt.
- **27 February 2008** The importance of sports as an integral part of education was underlined by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi as he inaugurated new sports facilities at the Santa Klara College girl's lyceum in Pembroke.
- **28 February 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi visited the Valletta primary, where interactive boards were installed as part of the Smartlearning strategy which is also seeing classroom computers being replaced, and their numbers increased. Dr Gonzi was accompanied by Mrs Gonzi, Education Minister Louis Galea and IT Minister Austin Gatt.
- **28 February 2008** A Students' House at Mcast, including a boardroom for the students' council, offices, a large common room, canteen and other facilities was inaugurated by Education Minister Louis Galea.
- **28 February 2008** New training programmes for persons going through a Caritas drug rehabilitation programme were launched by IT Minister Austin Gatt. Those following the programmes would be offered a job in the IT industry under a scheme through which the government would pay half the employee's pay in the first year, Dr Gatt said during a visit to participants of the drug rehabilitation programme at the Caritas facility in San Blas.

- **29 February 2008** Tourist arrivals in January grew by 23.4% compared to the same month in 2007 to reach 63,850, the National Statistics Office said.

MARCH

- **1 March 2008** IT and Investments Minister Austin Gatt announced the setting up of a Government Services Unit in his ministry designed to guarantee tenants of the new SmartCity project a swift and coordinated service from public entities. Within one year the unit will then provide the same service to all private industry investing in Malta, the IT Ministry said.
- **2 March 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated a Maltese Child Migrants' Monument at the Valletta Waterfront. The Prime Minister said that one of the conditions of a mother country's wellbeing and maturity was its capacity to remember all its children.
- **2 March 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Environment Minister Minister George Pullicino inaugurated the first phase of the Salina national park. This phase included an extension of Kennedy Grove with thousands of new trees planted, as well as new picnic areas.
- **2 March 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi laid the foundation stone of a primary school in Pembroke. The Prime Minister symbolically hammered the stone in place during the ceremony for which Dr Gonzi's wife Kate and Education Minister Louis Galea were also present.
- **3 March 2008** The Transport Authority launched a programme to build 19 roads at Santa Marija Estate in Mellieha. Roads Minister Jesmond Mugliett said that the project involves an investment of €1.6 million. Mr Mugliett also said that during this legislature 630 residential roads in 47 localities were built at a cost of €28 million. This averaged a road every three days, the minister said.
- **3 March 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, inaugurated a home in Cospicua set up by *Agenzija Sapport*. This home will receive up to six residents with a disability as part of a supported living programme. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of looking at the abilities of people rather than getting sidetracked by their disability.
- **3 March 2008** The 8th Community Technology Learning Centre (CTLC), which will provide free training courses in information and communication technology, was opened at the Employment Training Centre in Old Theatre Street, Valletta by IT Minister Austin Gatt.
- **4 March 2008** During a press conference at Ta' Qali, Environment Minister George Pullicino announced an adventure park which is to be developed on a 92,500 square metre extension of the Ta' Qali National Park. Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech and US ambassador Molloy Bordonaro also attended.
- **4 March 2008** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport grew by 18% in February this year over last year, MIA said. This means an increase of 20.5% in the first two months of 2008 when compared to the corresponding period last year.

- **5 March 2008** A €3.5m Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) and Digital CCTV Security Infrastructure project were formally declared operational by Transport Minister Censu Galea at the Maritime Trade Centre, Marsa.
- **5 March 2008** The Malta Stock Exchange registered a pre-tax profit of €1.3 million in 2007, a 15% increase over the previous year. Primary listings raised €808 million, including the government treasury bills. Market turnover reached a total of €457 million, an increase of 22%.
- **5 March 2008** The National Commission for Higher Education presented its Annual Report for the year ending 2007 to the Minister of Education Youth and Employment, in accordance with the requirement of Article 66 of the Education Act.
- **5 March 2008** A new childcare centre, *Nanna-kola*, was inaugurated at the Gharghur government school by Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg and Family Minister Dolores Cristina. Dr Borg said the centre was in line with the government's vision that schools should not be just centres of education, culture and sports but also offer services in the community.
- **6 March 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 2,787 persons in October while unemployment decreased by 512 persons when compared to October 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **7 March 2008** The importance of the transfer and sharing of good practices on the reception of asylum seekers was discussed at a specialised conference held in Malta. The conference was organised by the Organisation for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers with the collaboration of ENARO, the European Network of Asylum Reception Organisations and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, among others.
- **7 March 2008** Malta International Airport said it made a pre-tax profit of €14.09 million on ordinary activities in the year which ended on December 31, 2007.
- **8 March 2008** Malta went to the polls with 314,364 registered voters - bar those who failed to collect their voting document - having the right to choose from 169 candidates to elect a 65-member Parliament for the next five years.
- **8 March 2008** The Hon. Dr Lawrence Gozni was re-elected Prime Minister of Malta at the general elections.
- **8 March 2008** The local elections were held in 23 localities in Malta and Gozo.
- **10 March 2008** There was a slight increase in the employment rate of women over the past seven years, rising from 33% in 2000 to 35% in 2006, when over half of the total population in Malta was female, the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 March 2008** The labour supply increased by 2,275 persons in October 2007 over the same month in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 March 2008** Swearing in ceremony of the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi as Prime Minister of Malta.

- **12 March 2008** The President of Malta H.E. Dr Edward Fenech Adami appointed the cabinet of ministers and parliamentary secretaries.
- **13 March 2008** The visible trade gap in January 2008 stood at €95.1 million up by €15.9 million when compared to the same month last year, preliminary figures released by the National Statistics Office showed.
- **13 March 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and Finance Minister Tonio Fenech attended the Spring European Council in Brussels by Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa, Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk.
- **13 March 2008** The producer price index of agricultural output rose by 8.4% in the fourth quarter of 2007 when compared to the same period last year, authorities report.
- **14 March 2008** Tourist arrivals increased by 16.8% in the last quarter of 2007, 38% of which were from the UK, a BOV MHRA (Malta Hotels & Restaurants Association) survey showed. Tourist expenditure in the same quarter grew by 7.2%.
- **15 March 2008** Outbound tourism in January was an estimated 18,398, an increase of 28% over the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 March 2008** Safeguarding the consumer was at the top of the EU's and the Government's agenda, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in his first local activity since being sworn in. Under the theme of 'Know Your Rights, Use Your Rights', the European Commission teamed up with the Consumer and Competition Division and the European Consumer Centre (Malta) in a bid to make consumers aware of their rights during European Consumer Day.
- **16 March 2008** While speaking at a Press Conference, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said that he looked forward to working with local councils on improving the environment, which will be at the heart of the new government's policies. Dr Gonzi welcomed the result of the local council elections and said one should discuss during this legislature how the local councils will continue to evolve.
- **17 March 2008** The Cabinet held its first meeting. The parliamentary secretaries and Richard Cachia Caruana, permanent representative to the EU, who has ministerial rank, also attended.
- **17 March 2008** The National Statistics Office said today that sales and employment in sampled enterprises in manufacturing industry declined during the fourth quarter of 2007 when compared to the same quarter the previous year, while investment increased. It said that sales by the sampled manufacturing enterprises stood at €580 million, a decrease of €63.6 million when compared to the same period in 2006.
- **18 March 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli toured Mater Dei Hospital and said that the government's priorities are to reduce waiting lists and improve community care so as to ease the pressure off hospitals. Mr Dalli was accompanied by Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Mario Galea, parliamentary secretary for care of the elderly.

- **18 March 2008** During the fourth quarter of last year, sales by the sampled manufacturing enterprises stood at €580 million, a drop of €63.6 million when compared to the same period in 2006, the National Statistics office said.
- **19 March 2008** Some 350 staff from eight leading organisations carried out voluntary refurbishment works at eight institutional homes around Malta and Gozo. They were marking the seventh Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Day celebrated annually in Malta on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker. The participating organisations were Deloitte, Gasan Group of Companies, HSBC Malta, M. Demajo Group, Middlesea Group, Mizzi Organisation, Simonds Farsons Cisk plc and the Vodafone Malta Foundation.
- **20 March 2008** In a message congratulating Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi on his re-election, the Malta Chamber of Planners said no planning system can function properly unless the government regulates the manner in which planners are trained and permitted to practise their profession.
- **20 March 2008** The increase in tourist arrivals which last year hit the 1.2 million mark on a national level was also recorded by the Gozitan tourism industry, according to the Gozo Tourism Association. In fact, tourist arrivals in Gozo registered a rise of 6,634 over 2006, representing a 19% increase.
- **22 March 2008** Children from Angela House, which is run by the Ursuline Sisters, visited members of the Sliema Boy Scouts and St Aloysius College who were camping in the gardens of Verdala Palace in Buskett. The invitation for the visit was made by the President and Mrs Fenech Adami who met the children and the nuns who take care of them.
- **22 March 2008** The deadline date until which Maltese lira banknotes and coins could be exchanged for euros or deposited at banks was reached.
- **24 March 2008** Total cruise passenger traffic in February amounted to 2,464, a decrease of 576 passengers over the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 March 2008** Hotel occupancy rose by 1.6% in January when compared to the corresponding month in 2007 to stand at an average of 34.9%, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 March 2008** Unemployment in February 2008 decreased by 845 when compared to the same month in 2007 to reach 6,342 persons, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 March 2008** The retail price index last month went up by 0.42% over the previous month, according to official figures. The National Statistics Office said this primarily reflected an increase of 4.76% in the Clothing and Footwear Index, mainly due to seasonal price increases.
- **27 March 2008** The 34 dance schools that operated in Malta last year employed 109 persons and generated a financial surplus of €391,836, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 March 2008** Tourist arrivals maintained their growth pattern last month, rising by 13.4% over February 2007, the National Statistics Office said.

- **28 March 2008** Government spending grew faster than revenue in the first two months of this year, widening the deficit between recurrent revenue and total expenditure by €43.4 million to €143.0 million when compared to the same period of 2007. The National Statistics Office said an increase of €86.8 million in total expenditure (excluding equity acquisition) was partly offset by an increase of €43.4 million in recurrent revenue.
- **29 March 2008** An increase in holiday makers from Germany, Spain and Italy boosted tourism by 13.4% in February over the same month last year despite a decline in visitors from the UK. The National Statistics Office estimated tourist departures last month at 57,335, as changing trends emerge in statistics for the first two months of the year, coming after a record year for tourism last year.
- **30 March 2008** Malta officially became part of the Schengen area.
- **31 March 2008** President Fenech Adami and Prime Minister Gonzi placed wreaths on the Freedom Monument at Vittoriosa during the official Freedom Day ceremony.

APRIL

- **1 April 2008** Grand Harbour Marina reported a profit after tax of €3.89m for the year which ended on December 31, 2007, up sharply from €742.03 in 2006.
- **1 April 2008** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech initialled the text of a double taxation avoidance treaty with the United States, a major milestone in the long-winding process. A US Treasury delegation visited Malta to initial the document on behalf of the United States.
- **2 April 2008** Malta continued to register a positive trend in its job market with the number of those registering for work remaining static at 5.8 percent for the third month in a row. Eurostat, the EU statistical arm, said Malta's unemployment levels in February continued to be lower than the average in the euro area, which stood at 7.1 per cent.
- **3 April 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi attended the meeting of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in Bucharest. One of the topics on the agenda was Malta's application to re-join the Partnership for Peace Programme (PFP).
- **3 April 2008** The female participation rate in employment jumped to 31.2 percent in the last quarter of 2007 from 29.2 percent in the same quarter in 2006, according to the results of a Labour Force Survey, published by the National Statistics Office.

- **4 April 2008** Airport passenger movements grew by 21.9 per cent in March when compared to the corresponding month in 2007 while aircraft movements grew by 207 (11.5 per cent) last month, Malta International Airport said.
- **4 April 2008** The cattle population in December 2007 amounted to 19,442 heads, an increase of 1.1 per cent over the comparative period in 2006. The National Statistics Office said 394 holdings were engaged in the cattle industry, of which 149 were oriented to the production of milk.
- **4 April 2008** Government spending on social benefits grew by 5.2 percent last year, mostly because of a higher retirement pensions bill, the National Statistics Office said.
- **4 April 2008** There was a statistically significant change in average employment in the fourth quarter last year when the total number of people employed reached 155,868, the National Statistics Office said.
- **5 April 2008** Total expenditure on social security benefits increased by €28.5 million last year, 5.2 per cent more than in 2006, to reach €572.3 million, the National Statistics Office said.
- **5 April 2008** Addressing the European Regional Commonwealth Nursing Conference, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said he was determined to put the interests of patients first as new systems are adopted in the health service.
- **6 April 2008** Armed Forces of Malta personnel joined another 12 countries taking part in the large multinational naval exercise Phoenix Express 2008.
- **7 April 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 3,096 persons in November while unemployment decreased by 710 when compared to November 2006, according to official figures released by the National Statistics Office.
- **7 March 2008** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) said it determined 274 development applications in March and received 460 new applications. The net pending caseload at the end of the month was 4,773.
- **8 April 2008** Mrs Kate Gonzi, wife of the Prime Minister, lent a hand in a beach cleaning activity at Golden Bay organized by the Richmond Foundation as part of activities marking its 15th anniversary.
- **9 April 2008** The visible trade gap widened by €8.1 million to €94.7 million in February 2008 when compared to February 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 April 2008** Commuters between Malta and Gozo increased by 12.4 percent to 800,394 in the first quarter of this year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 April 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi made a speech during his first tour of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, which is now officially under his wing. The event was one of his first official appearances in public after being sworn in last month.
- **10 April 2008** The Maltese economy continued to perform at a sustained pace last year, registering a growth of four per cent, almost 1.5 percentage points

more than the average in the euro area. GDP growth figures for the fourth quarter of last year, published by Eurostat, showed that Malta's economy continued to register a healthy cycle with growth of 4.3 per cent in the last three months of the year.

- **11 April 2008** Malta and the United States signed a memorandum of understanding for Malta to form part of the US Visa Waiver Programme. The MoU was signed by Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmenu Mifsud Bonnici and US Ambassador Molly Bordonaro and marks the first step for Maltese citizens to eventually be able to travel to the United States without requiring a visa.
- **11 April 2008** The number of passengers between Malta and Gozo increased by 12.4 percent in the first quarter of 2008 over the same period last year, totalling 800,394, the National Statistics Office said.
- **12 April 2008** A total of 285 cars bearing foreign registration plates were impounded by the Malta Transport Authority (ADT) since June 2006, a spokesman for the Authority said.
- **13 April 2008** The gaming industry directly contributed over €8 million in gaming tax and an estimated €15 million in VAT, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech revealed.
- **14 April 2008** Fixed line telephony and postal services have managed to hold their own in this day and age of mobile telephony and the internet, according to figures issued by the National Statistics Office. At the end of last year, the number of fixed line subscriptions reached 226,951, from 209,648 at the end of 2006.
- **15 April 2008** The number of Maltese going abroad grew by almost a third in February, official figures show. The National Statistics Office said the number of Maltese departing by air and sea in February reached 17,042, an increase of 31.3 percent over the same month in 2007.
- **15 April 2008** More than 120 million text messages were sent between last October and December, according to figures released by the National Statistics Office. The figures show that the number of mobile phone subscriptions have more than doubled since 2001.
- **16 April 2008** The index of consumer prices rose by 1.1 per cent last month the National Statistics Office said. It said there was an increase of 6.1 percent in the Clothing and Footwear Index, due to price increases in garments and a 3.3 percent increase in restaurant and hotel prices brought about by seasonal price increases in accommodation services.
- **16 April 2008** The Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information within the Office of the Prime Minister, Chris Said, held a meeting with officials from the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe.
- **17 April 2008** The EU Ombudsman last year received a total of 26 complaints from Maltese citizens according to the annual report released in Brussels.

- **18 April 2008** Air Malta said that, for the first time, it carried more than half a million passengers during winter (November - March) - an increase of 15 percent over last winter.
- **18 April 2008** In the fourth quarter of 2007 the General Government Account registered a surplus of €84.7 million, compared to a surplus of €33.3 million for the fourth quarter 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **18 April 2008** The pig population in December amounted to 76,900, an increase of 4.4 per cent, or 3,217 pigs, over the same period in 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **19 April 2008** General government net borrowing (or deficit) last year was estimated at €95.8 million, down from a deficit of €129.2 million for 2006, the National Statistics Office said.
- **20 April 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi delivered a keynote address at a forum entitled 'Architecture and politics: partnering for sustainable development in the Mediterranean' on the occasion of the Union of Mediterranean Architects' (UMAR) 14th general assembly in Malta. Other speakers included French Ambassador Jean Marc Rives, UMAR president Patrice Genet, Prof. Lino Briguglio, chairman of the National Committee for Sustainable Development, and KTP president David Felice.
- **21 April 2008** The number of licensed motor vehicles rose by 2,330 in the first quarter of 2008, to stand at 289,450, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 April 2008** The 2008 conference of the European Regions Airline Association was held at the Westin Dragonara Resort.
- **22 April 2008** Visitors on cruise liners dropped by 60 percent last month from March 2007 to reach 6,166 persons, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 April 2008** MEP Simon Busuttil, the EPP-ED group spokesman on Frontex, visited the Armed Forces of Malta's headquarters and operations centre at Luqa Barracks.
- **22 April 2008** Malta is one of few EU member states with a positive trade balance with Japan. Statistics published by Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, showed that last year the island had a €38 million positive trade balance with that country.
- **23 April 2008** Foreign Minister Tonio Borg had talks in Tripoli with Libyan Foreign Minister Abdul Rahman Shalgam. They discussed oil exploration, immigration, the proposed Union for the Mediterranean and the granting of visas, among other issues.
- **23 April 2008** While speaking during a visit to the Naxxar Boy's Secondary School, Education Minister Dolores Cristina insisted that discipline in schools is very important and parents need to understand this and follow it up with their good example.
- **24 April 2008** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.68 percent in March over the previous month, the National Statistics Office said. The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1.94 percent, with the annual rate at 3.89 percent.

- **25 April 2008** The shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first three months of the year increased by €80.4 million, and amounted to €210.1 million when compared to the same period of 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 April 2008** Addressing the 16th annual general meeting of shareholders, Malta International Airport CEO Julian Jaeger said that the contract signed between Malta International Airport and Nuance Malta Ltd, leaders in the international airport retail business, will guarantee revenue of €25.5 million for six years.
- **25 April 2008** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1.94 per cent in March, whereas the annual rate stood at 3.89 per cent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 April 2008** Speaking at the opening of the three-day Air Malta International Travel Exhibition (Amitex) at the Malta Fairs and Convention Centre at Ta' Qali, Finance and Economy Minister Tonio Fenech said that Air Malta plays an important role in the government's vision of Malta, excelling in six areas which are set to be the strong pillars of the country's economy. These pillars were information and communication technology, financial services, tourism, higher education, health and the manufacturing industry.
- **27 April 2008** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi and Mrs Gonzi, presided over the official opening of the Melita FC Sports Complex. The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport also attended.
- **28 April 2008** Unemployment dropped by 865 persons last month when compared to March 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 April 2008** The volume and wholesale value of fish landings rose by 52.9 percent and 72.1 percent respectively in the first three months of this year compared to the first quarter of 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 April 2008** Companies need to strive for improvement in order to become more competitive if they want to face up to today's challenges brought about by the rising price of oil, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said during a visit to Mdina Glass, within the Ta' Qali crafts village.
- **30 April 2008** Tourist arrivals grew by 27 percent in March 2008 compared to March 2007, while total tourist nights increased by 21.1 percent, official figures issued by the National Statistics Office show.
- **30 April 2008** The number of traffic accidents in the first three months of this year dropped by 224 to 3,639, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 May 2008** Malta's economy is doing well but this should not be taken for granted as there are many challenges ahead that can only be overcome by working together as a nation, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi told a national conference organised to mark Workers' Day.

MAY

- **1 May 2008** The volume and wholesale value of fish landings in the first three months went up by 52.9 percent and 72.1 percent respectively over the first quarter of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 May 2008** Tourism from January to March rose 22 percent over the same quarter last year to reach a total of 211,689 visitors, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 May 2008** Unemployment continued to decline last month, with Eurostat figures showing it fell to 5.6 percent in March, one percentage point less than 12 months earlier and a slight drop of 0.1 percent on February.
- **1 May 2008** The number of reported traffic accidents in the first quarter of this year reached 3,639, a drop of 224 cases or 5.8 percent over the corresponding quarter last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 May 2008** Resources Minister George Pullicino had an introductory meeting with European Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels.
- **2 May 2008** Archbishop Paul Cremona led the funeral mass of President Emeritus Sir Anthony Mamo at St. John's Co-Cathedral. The congregation was headed by President Edward Fenech Adami as well as Chief Justice Vincent DeGaetano, the Speaker, Anton Tabone, and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **3 May 2008** A conference entitled 'Healthy Youth, Healthy Nation: Enhancing Relationships For The Common Good' was held for people who work with young people. The conference, held under the auspices of the Commissioner for Children Carmen Zammit and AIESEC, the international student organisation, covered various issues concerning young people such as adolescent development, spiritual development, the path to success and the active participation of young people.
- **3 May 2008** Sustainable development shall be the main thrust of the government's action in the coming years, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking at the Valletta Waterfront during the inauguration of the new offices of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (Rempec).
- **5 May 2008** Last month was one of the driest Aprils on record with just 3.6 mm of rainfall, the Malta International Airport Met Office said.
- **6 May 2008** Brice Hortefeux, French Minister for Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Development Partnership came to Malta for talks, as France prepares to assume the EU presidency from the middle of this year. His visit included talks with Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici.
- **6 May 2008** Gozo Channel ferries carried almost 80,000 passengers and 20,000 vehicles in the five days between April 30 and May 4, the Ministry for Gozo said.
- **6 May 2008** Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, and APS Bank signed an agreement on a Youth Specialisation Studies Scheme (YSSS). The agreement incorporates the forthcoming three years and involves MCAST and ITS students.

- **7 May 2008** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) said that it determined 739 applications in April and received 591 new applications. The net pending caseload at the end of the month was 4,801.
- **8 May 2008** French Prime Minister François Fillon underscored the need for common EU rules on immigration following talks at Castille with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. The French PM was in Malta for a few hours as part of a tour of EU capitals ahead of the French presidency of the EU, which starts in July.
- **8 May 2008** Malta International Airport (MIA) said passenger movements in April increased by 14,621 for a total of 251,548, an increase of 6.2 percent over the April 2007 figure.
- **8 May 2008** The volume of fresh fruit and vegetables passing through the official markets in the first quarter of this year amounted to 10 million kilos, a drop of 12.2 percent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 May 2008** Official figures issued showed a decline in Malta's international trade in March. The National Statistics Office said that imports fell by €22.7 million and exports were down by €32.2 million.
- **9 May 2008** Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Tonio Fenech underlined the government's intention to safeguard economic stability in an increasingly volatile global scenario when he launched the first public consultation meeting ahead of the Budget 2009.
- **9 May 2008** Malta International Airport registered yet another increase in passenger movements after gains recorded over the previous months. It said it had seen 251,548 movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights in April, a 6.2 percent rise over the same month last year.
- **10 May 2008** The State Opening of the 11th Parliament since independence took place, with President Edward Fenech Adami outlining the government's programme in an address in the House after Mass of the Holy Spirit at St John's Co-Cathedral. Proceedings in the House were opened with the swearing in of the new Speaker, Louis Galea, who was escorted in the House by the Prime Minister and Opposition leader Alfred Sant.
- **11 May 2008** Air Malta was one of the most successful European airlines in the first quarter this year in terms of passenger growth, according to statistics published by the Association of European Airlines. The national airline's passenger numbers shot up by 12.8 percent this year, substantially higher than the 2.6 percent average growth measured by the 30 other airlines surveyed.
- **12 May 2008** President Edward Fenech Adami and the High Commission of the Republic of South Africa to Malta, Lenin Shope paid tribute to Nelson R. Mandela during a celebration marking South Africa's National Day, known as Freedom Day. This was the second time that the event was commemorated in Malta.
- **13 May 2008** While speaking in Parliament during the debate in reply to the President's Address at the state opening of Parliament, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said that the government intended to continue pension reform with a view to concluding it.

- **13 May 2008** The government is to introduce a corporate governance framework for public enterprises and an updated code of ethics for the members of the boards of public bodies, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi told senior civil servants. He said the government also intends to intensify its fight against fraud and irregularities through various initiatives. Dr Gonzi was speaking at a seminar on financial controls in the public sector.
- **13 May 2008** Unemployment dropped by almost 1,000 and the gainfully occupied rose by 3,183 last December when compared to the previous December. The National Statistics Office, quoting ETC figures, said the registered unemployed decreased by 989 persons and the labour supply increased by 2,194 to 149,008 persons.
- **13 May 2008** Nearly 60,000 Maltese passengers departed by air and sea in the first three months of the year, an increase of over a quarter since the same period last year. The National Statistics Office put the figure at 59,329, an increase of 27.1 percent.
- **14 May 2008** Non-fatal accidents at work decreased by 12 percent to reach 920 in the first quarter of this year, compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **15 May 2008** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices increased by 2.3 percent in April compared to March, the National Statistics Office said.
- **15 May 2008** Answering a Parliamentary question, Social Policy Minister John Dalli told parliament that 2,250 single parents receive social security benefits.
- **15 May 2008** The Corradino Corrective Facility houses 414 prisoners, of whom 120 are still awaiting to be sentenced. Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a Parliamentary question.
- **15 May 2008** The European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services Charlie McCreevy visited Malta. He met President Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and the Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, Tonio Fenech.
- **16 May 2008** Government spending on social security benefits rose by almost a fifth in the first quarter of this year, driven by higher payments on pensions and children's allowances, the National Statistics Office said. Total expenditure on social security benefits amounted to €174.0 million during the first three months of 2008, up by €28.0 million over the same period last year.
- **16 May 2008** Inflation eased slightly last month although it still remained above the average in the euro zone. New figures published by Eurostat show that Malta's annual rate of inflation last month stood at 4.1 percent, a 0.2 drop on the annual inflation rate for March.
- **17 May 2008** Data released by the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Department shows that over 700 people fell victim to food-poisoning last year.
- **17 May 2008** Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 19.2 percent in the first three months of this year, driven mainly by outlays on retirement and widow's pensions and children's allowances, the National Statistics Office said.

- **19 May 2008** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said that despite international economic uncertainty the Maltese economy maintained its growth momentum in the first quarter of this year and the outlook remained good. Speaking at the launching the Economic Bulletin 2007, issued by the ministry, Mr Fenech said Gross Domestic Product growth this year was projected at 3 percent, slightly lower than last year.
- **20 May 2008** While speaking during a meeting with a private company, Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said that the private sector has an important role to play in implementing initiatives to safeguard the environment and should launch schemes that provide an incentive for the purchase of environment-friendly products.
- **21 May 2008** The number of young people visiting Malta rose significantly in the first months of this year, an indication that efforts by the Malta Tourism Authority in this direction are paying off, Parliamentary Secretary Mario de Marco said. He said that last year, visitors aged up to 24 years constituted 15.2 percent of arrivals, while those aged 25-44 represented 36.2 percent. So far this year, those aged under 24 have increased by 53.3 percent and the 25-44 age group has shown growth of 32 percent.
- **21 May 2008** The Maltese have become more conscious, even thanks to tourism, of protecting the country's cultural and architectural heritage - also because the number of tourists visiting Malta for cultural reasons is on the increase, the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco, said. He was addressing a meeting of tourism ministers of the so-called 5+5 Western Mediterranean forum of countries in Ajaccio, Corsica, attended also by representatives of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania and Morocco.
- **22 May 2008** The importation of fossil fuels increased by 17 percent between 2000 and 2007 but the fuel mix is becoming cleaner, according to information published by the National Statistics Office.
- **22 May 2008** There are 3,819 people on the waiting list for a grave at the Addolorata Cemetery - a thousand more than the graves to be dug up, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said yesterday, in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **22 May 2008** A total of 443 foreigners reported a theft to the police in the first four months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **22 May 2008** There are 16 prisoners on a suspended sentence in jail because of breaching a condition. Thirteen are under 30, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **22 May 2008** Total cruise passenger traffic between January and April amounted to 56,747, a drop of 1.6 percent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 May 2008** Answering a parliamentary question, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said that 28,118 people receive subsidies on the electricity surcharge.

- **22 May 2008** A total of €11,696,824 were paid in overseas social security pensions last year, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in answer to a parliamentary question.
- **23 May 2008** The Ministry of Education launched a new scholarship scheme for under-graduates and renewed the scheme for post-graduate scholarships. Education Minister Dolores Cristina launched the schemes at a press conference, where she underscored the importance of further education.
- **23 May 2008** As at the end of March, there were 1,096 pending applications by elderly wanting to be admitted in an old people's home in Malta, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **23 May 2008** The demand for fossil fuel energy followed a continuous upward trend over the past eight years rising by 17 percent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 May 2008** Unemployment in April dropped by 662 to reach 5,478 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 May 2008** The President and Mrs Fenech Adami met the victims of the March 12 fireworks explosion during an official two-day visit Naxxar.
- **27 May 2008** An average of 305 persons are calling at the hospital emergency department every day, with 111,688 calls made last year, the Health Department said.
- **27 May 2008** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.37 percent last month over March, the National Statistics Office said. The increase was mainly the result of an increase of 2.77 percent in the Clothing and Footwear Index, and an increase of 1.22 percent in the Housing Index.
- **27 May 2008** The number of registered unemployed in April stood at 6,086, which is 662 fewer than in the same month a year ago, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 May 2008** Out of 9,546 students currently following courses at the University of Malta, there are 528 foreign students from 75 nationalities. These consisted of 232 males and 296 females. Education Minister Dolores Cristina said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 May 2008** The 285 prisoners currently at the Corradino Correctional Facility hail from 55 localities in Malta and Gozo, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici told Edwin Vassallo in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 May 2008** Between academic year 2003-04 and May 21, 2008, the number of youths who asked to be exempted from school so that they could go to work was 402, Education Minister Dolores Cristina said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 May 2008** During the first four months of this year there were 624 coronary angiograms carried out at Mater Dei Hospital, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 May 2008** Between May and December last year, the police issued 522 tickets for the use of bus lanes by unauthorised vehicles. Between January

and April this year, 210 tickets were issued, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.

- **28 May 2008** The Retail Price Index went up from 113.66 in March to 114.08 in April this year, representing a 0.37 per cent increase. This primarily reflected an increase of 2.77 percent in the clothing and footwear Index.
- **29 May 2008** The government's gross tax revenue for the first four months of the year reached €185,486,492, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **29 May 2008** A total of 49 civil marriages took place in the first quarter of this year, Communications Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **29 May 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli told parliament that the government should be getting €153,446 for services rendered to foreigners at hospitals in Malta and Gozo during the first four months of this year. In reply to another parliamentary question, the minister said that the government was owed a total of €850,383 for hospital services rendered to foreigners since 1994.
- **29 May 2008** Government income from court fines in the first four months of this year amounted to €550,279, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **30 May 2008** The shortfall between government recurrent revenue and total expenditure grew by €76.6 million to €208.7 million between January and April this year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 May 2008** Theatres put up 475 performances during 2006 appealing to an audience of 182,464, with concerts being the most popular, the National Statistics Office said.

JUNE

- **1 June 2008** A 50-hour car wash marathon in aid of the Children's Fund of Aġenzija Appogg took place at the Ta' Xbiex marina. Social Policy Minister John Dalli and Joe Gerada, chief executive of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services visited the marathon.
- **3 June 2008** Tourism in April grew by 3.0 percent when compared to the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **3 June 2008** There was a positive response by members of the public and by institutional investors to the latest government stock issues, the government said. By the closing date which was noon of Friday 30 May, the treasury had received 2,089 applications with a total value exceeding €109 million against the authorised sum on issue of €100 million which was subject to an over-allotment option for an additional €50 million.

- **4 June 2008** Italian Ambassador Paolo Andrea Trabalza paid a courtesy visit to the University of Malta Junior College in Msida.
- **5 June 2008** Two divorces were recorded at the Gozo Public Registry last year, Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono said in reply to a parliamentary question. The minister said that one had been obtained in Melbourne and the other in New York.
- **5 June 2008** The Malta Council for Culture and the Arts spent €46,688 on this year's Eurovision Song Contest. All other expenses were covered by sponsorships. Culture Minister Dolores Cristina gave the information in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **5 June 2008** The number of available beds at Mater Dei Hospital in April was 860 for in-patients and 66 for day cases, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **5 June 2008** The number of first-time drivers who lost their driving licences on the points system was 46, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **5 June 2008** Answering a parliamentary question Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said that in the two years starting May 28, 2006, there were 11 cases of marriage annulment requests filed in the Magistrates Court in Gozo. Over the same two years the number of cases decided was 15.
- **5 June 2008** Between January and March 2008 the Tax Compliance Unit concluded 19 cases, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 June 2008** May was a rather warm month with a mean temperature of 20.2°C but no weather records were broken, according to information issued by the MET office. The warmest May was 1945 with a mean temperature of 21.8 °C, whilst the coolest was that of 1991 with 17.1°C.
- **6 June 2008** Meat production in the first quarter increased by 14.5 percent over the same three months last year, reaching 3,627 tonnes, the National Statistics Office said.
- **6 June 2008** The improvement of business regulations will remain a top priority for the government, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said while addressing constituted bodies during a business breakfast on Facilitating Business Operations, held as part of the consultation process on the pre-budget document.
- **7 June 2008** Greenhouse gas emissions in Malta increased by 45 percent between 1990 and 2006 and emissions per capita rose from about 5.78 tonnes in 1990 to 7.58 tonnes two years ago, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 June 2008** Throughout 2007 and in the first three months of 2008 there were a total of almost 35,000 individual and corporate taxpayers who received tax refunds to the tune of almost €13.9 million, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said answering a parliamentary question.

- **10 June 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 3,295 persons while unemployment dropped by 845 persons in January when compared to January 2007 the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 June 2008** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first quarter increased by 3.5 per cent in real terms over the same period last year, according to provisional estimates. The increase was of 6.2 percent at market prices.
- **10 June 2008** Last year the police issued 1,410 summons for traffic contraventions and 63,458 traffic offence tickets in various locations around Malta and Gozo. The information was given by Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **11 June 2008** The number of births in Malta has been declining steadily over the past few years, while the average age of the mothers is getting older, figures issued today by the National Obstetric Information System (NOIS) show.
- **11 June 2008** Outbound tourism in April reached 19,047, an increase of 1.3 percent over the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 88.3 percent travelled by air and 16,279 travelled to EU destinations, the most popular being Italy and the UK.
- **11 June 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population in January rose by 3,295 persons while unemployment dropped by 845 persons when compared to January 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **11 June 2008** In the first four months of this year there were 434 water cuts: 406 in Malta and the rest in Gozo, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **11 June 2008** There was a waiting list of 1,090 cases for admission to government old people's homes up to May 31, 2008, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **11 June 2008** While answering a parliamentary question Transport Minister Austin Gatt said the registration tax levied on imported second-hand cars last year amounted to €19,226,041.
- **12 June 2008** Agriculture prices rose steeply in the first quarter of this year, figures issued by the National Statistics Office confirmed. The producer price index for agricultural products stood at 113.3 points, an increase of 13.9 points (+14.0 percent) from 99.4 points in the first quarter of 2007. An increase of 50.5 percent was registered in the fresh vegetables price index, resulting from a general decrease in the supply of fresh vegetables on the market.
- **12 June 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli said the earliest records of requisitioned properties dated back to 1995, when there were 25,217. The current number is 1,759. The records do not indicate whether these properties are private or public. Mr Dalli was answering a parliamentary question.
- **12 June 2008** The SON street lamps currently being installed save 44 percent of energy vis-a-vis the HPMV type used up to a few years ago, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt told Anthony Agius Decelis in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **12 June 2008** The government's vision for Gozo is that it becomes an ecological island - a model of sustainable development, generating energy from alternative sources, using organic agriculture and supporting ecotourism and agrotourism, Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said. He was addressing the last in a series of five pre-budget consultation meetings that tackled issues related to Gozo.
- **12 June 2008** There are 9,060 patients waiting to see an optometrist in government health centres, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **12 June 2008** The number of Maltese passengers leaving by air and sea between January and April this year amounted to 78,380, an increase of 19.7 percent over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 June 2008** A total of 3,898 babies were born in the Maltese islands last year, of whom 280 or 7.2 percent were born in Gozo, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **13 June 2008** A total of €72,488,021 in income tax is being disputed, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **14 June 2008** Malta registered the strongest employment growth among the 15-member eurozone in the first quarter of 2008. Statistics published in Brussels by Eurostat - the EU's statistical arm - showed that Malta had a 4.5 percentage growth in employment when compared to the previous March.
- **14 June 2008** There are 2,127 people on the waiting list for a knee replacement and another 1,035 for a hip replacement, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **14 June 2008** All 52 doctors who graduated from the University of Malta last year are still working in the public service, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **14 June 2008** In the six-month period between November 2007 and April 2008 the total cost of running Mater Dei Hospital on cash basis amounted to €50,515,898, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 June 2008** A dramatic increase in the number of births through Caesarean section has been registered between 1995 and last year, with a jump of 16 percent. Figures from the National Obstetrics Information System (NOIS) show that the percentage of Caesareans shot up from 15.9 percent in 1995 to 32.3 percent last year.
- **17 June 2008** Malta's inflation in May remained stable at a high 4.1 percent when compared to the previous month, although inflation in the eurozone increased from 3.3 to 3.7 percent. Eurostat figures issued yesterday in Brussels show the EU 27 average going up from 3.6 percent in April to 3.9 percent in May.
- **18 June 2008** A total of 604 shotguns, 463 rifles and 438 revolvers were registered for the first time last year, according to information given in parliament.

- **18 June 2008** Air Malta authorised the carriage of 3,057 passengers to Malta to enable them to vote in the general elections of March 8. The highest numbers were 1,685 from the United Kingdom and 274 from Belgium. The information was given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **18 June 2008** Addressing the 15th joint meeting of the European Network of Information Centres in the European Region and National Academic Recognition Information Centres, Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said that student mobility in and out of Malta is on the rise and that students in higher levels of education are becoming more mobile than ever following Malta's EU membership in 2004.
- **19 June 2008** The number of foreigners who came to Malta to learn English last year rose by almost a third to 86,593 when compared to 2006 according to the National Statistics Office.
- **19 June 2008** The running costs of the Park and Ride have so far reached €544,573.89, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **19 June 2008** The government's total debt as at March 31 stood at just over €3,280 million, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech told Parliament while answering a parliamentary question.
- **19 June 2008** There are 13 domestic houses which have changed to the alternative energy of photovoltaics, IT Minister Austin Gatt said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **20 June 2008** Air Malta registered a 30 percent increase in passenger numbers in May compared to the same month in 2007, the biggest monthly increase since it was set up 35 years ago, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said.
- **20 June 2008** The number of foreign students following courses in English language schools rose by 31.2 per cent in 2007 over the previous year, totalling 86,593.
- **22 June 2008** Wasteserv Malta has collected 5,329 tonnes of bulky waste through its three civic amenity sites in the first five months this year, which represents a 241 percent increase over the same period last year.
- **23 June 2008** Total expenditure by the government on Research and Development (R&D) in 2007 amounted to €11.3 million, an increase of €0.7 million or 6.7 percent over the previous year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 June 2008** A total of 115 Maltese nationals have been granted divorce by the courts of EU member states since Malta joined the EU, information given in Parliament by minister Austin Gatt shows.
- **24 June 2008** A delegation representing the Muslim Community in Malta paid a visit to Prime Minister, Lawrence Gonzi at his office in Castille. The delegation was headed by the Imam, Muhammad El Sadi and Wagdi Nashnosh, General Secretary of the Malta Branch of the World Islamic Call Society. They discussed the needs of the Muslim community and the delegation pledged full co-operation with the Maltese government for the common good.

- **24 June 2008** Unemployment dropped by 562 to reach 6,018 in May compared to the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 June 2008** Cruise passenger traffic up to May rose 20 percent compared to the first five months of last year, reaching 131,311 passengers.
- **26 June 2008** The crime rate has started to creep up again, with the first four months of the year showing a 4.76 percent increase in crimes compared to the same period last year, the opposition spokesman for the home affairs, said.
- **26 June 2008** A total 186 cases of bullying were reported in public schools last year, Education Minister Dolores Cristina said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **26 June 2008** A total of €179.1 million were paid as interest on the national debt last year, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **26 June 2008** The public service employed 29,260 as at last April 1,10 employees less than the number that at the beginning of the year, the Prime Minister said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **27 June 2008** The government deficit widened in the first five months of this year as increased revenue failed to keep up with increased spending, official figures released today show. The National Statistics Office said the shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure increased by €80.7 million, and amounted to €235.8 million when compared to the same period in 2007.
- **27 June 2008** Tourist arrivals grew by 20.5 percent in May compared to the same month in 2007, to reach 131,354, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 June 2008** A staggering 26,121 people are estimated to be illiterate in Malta. That includes 938 who are between 10 and 19 years old, 1,392 who are between 20 and 29 years, 1,845 who are between 30 and 39 years old and 3,971 aged between 40 and 49. However the age bracket with the highest rate of illiteracy is that between 50 and 59, with 5,584. The information was given in Parliament by Education Minister Dolores Cristina in reply to a parliamentary question.

JULY

- **1 July 2008** The government has allocated €60 million in EU Cohesion funds for the development of the harbours infrastructure, Austin Gatt, Minister of the Infrastructure and Communications said while speaking during the opening of new offices of Valletta Gateway Terminals Ltd within the Maritime Centre in Floriana.
- **1 July 2008** The prices of apartments are estimated to have increased by 8.62 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same time last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 July 2008** A total of 18,824 surgical operations were carried out at the new Mater Dei Hospital between its opening last November and the end of May.

Only 18.5 percent were emergency operations, with the rest considered as elective, statistics from the hospital's Clinical Performance Unit show.

- **2 July 2008** Replying to questions in Parliament, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said that while the government would invest in alternative sources of energy, it needed to be stressed that electricity production from alternative sources was more expensive than that from fossil fuels.
- **2 July 2008** The number of migrants who were repatriated from Malta last year was half that of 2006, figures given in Parliament show. There were 338 repatriations last year compared to 780 in 2006 and 954 in 2005. Repatriations reached 704 in 2004, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said.
- **2 July 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 3,039 in February while unemployment decreased by 845 when compared to February 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **2 July 2008** Property inflation was of just over 5.5 percent in March, the National Statistics Office said.
- **2 July 2008** In May, the unemployment rate stood at 5.8 percent, a fraction higher than the previous month's 5.7 percent. Compared to 12 months earlier, unemployment in May fell by almost one percentage point (6.5 per cent in May last year), figures published by Eurostat show.
- **2 July 2008** There were 34 people, including three women, over 65 years who were injured in a traffic accident while they were driving last year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **2 July 2008** Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt gave details of the average household's outlay for water and electricity between March 1, 2007, and March 1 this year. The total of €436.78 was made up of water consumption (€44.76), electricity consumption (€209.16), fuel surcharge (€126.96) and water and electricity meter rentals (€55.90). Dr Gatt was answering a parliamentary question.
- **2 July 2008** During the first four months of this year there were 503 power cuts in Malta and 12 in Gozo, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **2 July 2008** Between January 1996 and December 2005 there were 2,106 new cases of breast cancer in women and 28 in men, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **3 July 2008** The industrial producer price index rose by 1.2 percent in the euro area (EA15) and by 1.3 percent in the EU27 in May compared to the previous month, according to statistics by Eurostat. In April, prices increased by 0.9 percent and 1.1 percent respectively.
- **4 July 2008** Labour market statistics for February 2008 indicate that the number of Maltese residents in full-time paid employment has increased by 2.2 percent, reflecting a fall in the number of registered unemployed. The Employment and Training Corporation reported a rise in the island's labour

supply when compared with the same time last year with 95.8 percent in full-time paid employment.

- **7 July 2008** The percentage of babies registered as being of unknown fathers has jumped from 9.2 percent in 2006 to 9.09 per cent (352 out of 3,871 births) for 2007. The percentage in 2005 had been 7.48 percent. The information was given by Minister Austin Gatt in parliament.
- **8 July 2008** Answering a parliamentary question, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt confirmed that Enemalta had already bought part of its oil supplies for 2009 at 40 percent below the current international price of oil - but that is still dearer than what the corporation is currently paying.
- **8 July 2008** Between January 1 and June 1, 2008, there were 644 marriages and 70 civil annulments of marriage registered in the Public Registry, Communications Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **8 July 2008** There are a total of 13 favourable recommendations of the Tribunal for the Investigation of Injustices that have not yet been implemented, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **8 July 2008** Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said the Permanent Commission against Corruption had found three proven cases of corruption out of 378 cases it had been asked to investigate. The commission had closed 366 cases. The rest were still under investigation. Dr Mifsud Bonnici gave the information in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **9 July 2008** The number of Maltese travelling abroad rose by 11.4 percent to 23,615 in May when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 July 2008** President Edward Fenech Adami and Mrs Fenech Adami, accompanied by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, left Malta went for a two day official visit to Ukraine. There were talks with President Viktor Yuschchenko, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, Foreign Minister Volodymyr Ogrzyzko and Arseniy Yatseniuk, chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament.
- **9 July 2008** During the last year there were a total of 18 transplant operations: seven kidneys, 10 corneas and one heart. All donors were Maltese and no organs were imported. There are currently 80 patients on the waiting list for kidney transplants, three for heart transplants and 25 for cornea transplants. The information was given by Social Policy Minister John Dalli in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **9 July 2008** Up to June 30, there were a total of 14 tragic deaths in Malta and Gozo, compared to 86 in the whole of last year. Answering a parliamentary question, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said that in the first half of last year there were two cases of homicide (four last year), six traffic accidents (14), 10 suicides (27), one drug overdose (8) and 14 other cases (33).
- **9 July 2008** Between 2001 and up to June 30, the Magistrates' courts in Malta decided on 1,158 requests for annulment of marriage, while those in Gozo decided on 27, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.

- **9 July 2008** Between 2003 and June 30, 2008, there were a total of 339 Presidential pardons. The information was given by Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.
 - **10 July 2008** There were 22 cases of people caught committing immoral acts in public places so far this year. This compares with 106 last year, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.
 - **10 July 2008** Last year, the police caught 29 persons aged under 16 in places of entertainment, compared to 47 so far this year, Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.
 - **11 July 2008** Euro area (EA15) and EU27 GDP grew by 0.7 percent in the first quarter of 2008 compared with the previous quarter, according to second estimates from Eurostat.
 - **11 July 2008** Outbound Maltese tourists in May were estimated at 23,615, implying an increase of 11.4 percent over the same month in 2007, 20,799 (77.3 percent) of whom travelled by air, the National Statistics Office said.
 - **12 July 2008** According to the Malta Communications Authority's annual report, mobile phone users sent almost 500 million text messages last year.
 - **12 July 2008** The population of Malta and Gozo stood at 410,290 at the end of last year and is expected to reach 424,028 by 2025, the National Statistics Office said on the occasion of the 19th World Population Day.
 - **12 July 2008** The government account in the first quarter of this year registered a deficit of €162.5 million, compared to €107.8 million in the first quarter last year.
- 12 July 2008** The demographic challenge of an ageing population brought about by a decline in birth and death rates, brings with it social and economic imbalances that require wide-ranging and long lasting adjustments in society, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while addressing an informal European ministerial council for Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in Chantilly, France.
- **12 July 2008** EU27 citizens made 438 million trips of four nights or more in 2006. Of the total number of trips made, 61 percent were domestic and 39 percent outbound, according to Eurostat.
 - **13 July 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi was in Paris to attend the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean, a new structured relationship between the EU and its Mediterranean partners.
 - **15 July 2008** The President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, arrived for a two-day visit. President Abbas was on his way back home from the EU-Mediterranean summit in Paris.
 - **15 July 2008** Sea transport between Malta and Gozo registered an increase of 4.5 percent in the second quarter of this year, totalling 1,036,118 passengers. The number of vehicles carried by scheduled vessels also rose by 4.7 percent to 265,230.

- **15 July 2008** The police arraigned 23 persons under 18 years-of-age for having driven vehicles without a driving licence, last year, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **15 July 2008** EneMalta Corporation, last year, received €51,811,339 from the surcharge on electricity and €9,118,701 from the surcharge on water. This income was classified as ordinary revenue for the corporation. Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt gave this information in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **15 July 2008** The number of cases of domestic violence reported to Appoġġ between January 1 and June 14 of this year was 223. During the same period Appoġġ received 394 reports of child abuse, but this number included cases that had been reported more than once. Social Policy Minister John Dalli gave the information in reply to two parliamentary questions.
- **15 July 2008** The police, last year, received 42 reports under the general heading of child abuse, and charged 49 persons. Five of these cases were decided with two prison sentences, one suspended sentence and two acquittals.
- **15 July 2008** In the first six months of this year the police received 195 reports of stolen vehicles. Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici also said that during the same period, 96 vehicles were found after having been reported stolen. He was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **15 July 2008** There were 160,923 workers who paid national insurance contributions last year. The number of class 2 contributions among them was 20,406. The information was given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **15 July 2008** There were 341 smoking-related deaths in Malta and Gozo out of a total of 3,111 deaths, last year, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 July 2008** Minister for Gozo Giovanna Debono told Parliament that some 150 jobs had already been created in Gozo as a result of a restructuring exercise of the public sector. Speaking during the debate in second reading of the Public Administration Bill, Mrs Debono said that she hoped that as a result of centralisation, more back office employment could be offered to Gozitans to work in Gozo.
- **16 July 2008** Two persons were arraigned on charges related to usury in the first six months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 July 2008** This year, eight people were charged with smoking in public by the end of last month, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **18 July 2008** The number of Maltese students following under-graduate and post-graduate studies in the UK in 2006/2007 rose by 7 percent over the previous year to reach 835, the British Council said. In contrast, only 390 Maltese students were registered in the UK in 2003/2004.

- **19 July 2008** The Health Division has issued 141,669 European health insurance cards since 2006 and 22,500 cards since January of this year, the Health Ministry said.
- **19 July 2008** Malta's exports fell as imports grew in the first four months of the year when compared to the same period last year, according to figures published by Eurostat in Brussels.
- **19 July 2008** Malta's rate of inflation continued to spiral over the past month reaching 4.4 percent. According to data issued by Eurostat, Malta's inflation grew by 0.3 percent over May and is now 0.4 percent higher than the average in the euro area. The average inflation in the eurozone also hit record levels at 4 percent.
- **21 July 2008** The Civil Protection Department deals with between 10 and 25 calls every day, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said. In all, the department answered 5,300 calls over the past year.
- **23 July 2008** The annual rate of inflation climbed to 4.04 percent in June, the highest it has been for years, according to figures issued by the National Statistics Office.
- **25 July 2008** The government had a shortfall of €256.3 million between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first half of this year, official figures published show. That is an increase of €80.1 million when compared to the same period of 2007.
- **25 July 2008** Occupancy levels in hotels and other accommodation establishments went up by 6 percent in May compared to the same month last year, to stand at 63.9 percent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 July 2008** The Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary Chris Said had a meeting with the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) to discuss economic issues. Speaking to the press before the meeting, Dr Gonzi said Malta was facing a wave of challenges but he insisted that the economy was well-prepared thanks to a number of reforms being proposed and implemented by the government, following discussions with the social partners.
- **28 July 2008** Cruise passenger traffic in Malta rose by 21.4% in June over the same month last year to reach 67,259, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 July 2008** The stock of licensed motor vehicles rose by 2,470 in the second quarter of 2008 to reach 291,920, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 July 2008** The average annual ozone levels went up by 19 percent between 2005 and 2006, affecting rural areas mostly and giving cause for concern, according to the third report on State of the Environment Indicators 2007, launched by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA).
- **29 July 2008** Malta is prepared to face the wave of challenges that are approaching thanks to a number of reforms being implemented by the government, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking to reporters before a meeting with the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), held at Castille in Valletta, aimed at discussing several

economic issues. The meeting was also attended by Parliamentary Secretary Chris Said.

- **29 July 2008** The number of licensed motor vehicles rose by 2,470 in the second quarter of this year, to now stand at 291,920, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 July 2008** Cruise passenger traffic totalled 67,259 in June, an increase of 11,852 or 21.4 percent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. Embarkations from and landings in Malta stood at 1,661 and 1,438 respectively.
- **29 July 2008** The number of registered unemployed last month stood at 5,861, representing a drop of 476 persons compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said. The registered unemployed amounted to 5,194 persons in Malta and 667 in Gozo.
- **30 July 2008** There were talks on oil exploration during President Edward Fenech Adami's meeting with Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi. Dr Fenech Adami travelled to Libya with Foreign Affairs Minister Tonio Borg and Social Policy Minister John Dalli. The agenda included issues such as illegal immigration, tax cooperation and a cooperation agreement on health services.
- **30 July 2008** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech took part in a ministerial conference on the Doha Development Agenda, organised by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva.
- **31 July 2008** Tourist arrivals grew by just over 10% last month, although there was a 3.5% dip in arrivals from the UK, official figures issued show.

AUGUST

- **1 August 2008** - Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi was in Munich for a meeting with officials of Frosch Touristik, a leading German tour operator. The Prime Minister was accompanied for his two day visit by Mrs Gonzi and his private secretary, Charles Bonello.
- **1 August 2008** A parliamentary delegation led by David Agius, and including Joe Mizzi and Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, attended the 54th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which ended on August 10.
- **3 August 2008** The EU approved the release of the first batch of funds under the 2007-2013 financial programme, signalling the biggest ever investment in Malta which should contribute towards a radical upgrade of the island's infrastructure.
- **4 August 2008** Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 13.1 percent during the first six months of 2008, driven mainly by outlays on pensions in respect of retirement, contributory bonuses and children's allowances, the National Statistics Office said.

- **5 August 2008** The full-time gainfully occupied population increased by 2,907 persons in March while unemployment decreased by 865 persons when compared to March 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **5 August 2008** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority last month decided 605 applications and received 545 new applications. The pending caseload at the end of the month was 4,835, MEPA said.
- **6 August 2008** Airport passenger movements increased slightly in July when compared to the same month in 2007, Malta International Airport said. The total passenger movements in July 2008 increased by 1.3% for a total of 370,873 whilst aircraft movements decreased by 3.2% for a total of 2,965.
- **6 August 2008** TVM has remained the top television channel in terms of audience share, according to the Broadcasting Authority's Continuous Audience Assessment report for the second quarter of this year. Between April and June, TVM attracted 33 per cent of the audience and was followed by One TV at 15.1 percent and the foreign station Rai Uno with 11.6 percent.
- **6 August 2008** July's mean air temperature was a fraction warmer than the July norm recorded for the past 57 years, the Meteorological Office said. At 26.7 °C, it was 0.6 °C above the norm.
- **7 August 2008** Speaking during a visit to the Armed Forces of Malta Maritime Squadron base at Hay Wharf, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi yesterday said there were many lessons to be learned from the Simshar tragedy, and urged that it should not be forgotten. He said the AFM must continue to bolster its resources in all areas and fishermen should be given the best possible training.
- **8 August 2008** A trackless 'train' for the Rabat, Mdina and Mtarfa zone has been inaugurated by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **8 August 2008** An audiovisual fund of €233,000 has been set up by the government for the production of Maltese quality documentaries and short films. The scheme was launched by Education and Culture Minister Dolores Cristina, who said the fund would help local companies to be in a better position to benefit from EU assistance for their work.
- **8 August 2008** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi presides over the signing of the text of the double taxation treaty with the United States by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment and H.E. Ms Molly Bordonaro, Ambassador of the United States to Malta.
- **9 August 2008** Provisional data for international trade indicate that the visible trade gap last June stood at €91.8 million, down by €14.4 million from the same month last year, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said.
- **10 August 2008** A record 1,140 students applied for ICT courses offered at the Malta College for Arts, Sciences and Technology during registration week.
- **11 August 2008** The number of Maltese travelling abroad dropped by almost a quarter in June to reach 23,329 when compared to the same month last year, according to estimates published by the National Statistics Office.

- **12 August 2008** The number of reported traffic accidents in the second quarter this year totalled 4,073, an increase of 37 cases over the same quarter last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 August 2008** The supply and wholesale value of fresh fruit and vegetables during the second quarter of this year rose by 0.5 percent and 5.6 percent respectively.
- **13 August 2008** Subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased in the first quarter of the year. The number of mobile telephone subscriptions reached 372,009, which roughly translates into 90.3 percent of the population.
- **14 August 2008** The index of consumer prices shot up by 1.9 percent last month from the previous month, mostly as a consequence of the surcharge on power, the National Statistics Office said. The index increased to 110.58 from 108.55 in June.
- **15 August 2008** The 12-month moving average rate of inflation in Malta stood at 3.3 percent in July, while the annual rate of inflation stood at 5.6 percent, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said.
- **19 August 2008** Air Malta said today that it was the driving force behind the increase in tourism arrivals registered this year, with 57 percent of the 77,000 additional tourists who came to Malta in the first half of this year using the airline. In June, Air Malta continued to register the same double digit growth recorded over the last eight months, increasing its traffic by 13 percent.
- **20 August 2008** Workplace accidents rose by 7.4 percent in the second quarter of this year to reach 1,182, but there were no fatalities, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 August 2008** Rising prices, immigration and environmental protection topped the concerns listed by the Maltese in a national survey on Malta conducted in spring by Eurobarometre, the EU statistics agency. The report shows that 40 percent of respondents in a 500-people sample listed inflation as their top concern, followed by 29 percent who mentioned immigration and 21 percent who were concerned about the environment.
- **21 August 2008** Arrivals on cruise ships increased by 22.8 percent last month over the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **22 August 2008** Inspectors from the Consumer and Competition Division (CCD) of the Ministry of Finance carried out an average of 70 visits every day to retail outlets during the first six months of the year. A spokesman said a total of 12,622 price monitoring visits were carried out. Their main purpose was to ensure that pricing indication regulations are observed.
- **23 August 2008** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.86 percent over the previous month from 114.99 to 115.98 last month, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 August 2008** Maltese diplomatic missions and consular posts witnessed an increase of 665 percent in visa applications from Russia since the beginning of the year. The number of visa applications received by Maltese diplomatic

missions and consular posts around the world has shot up after Malta's entry into the Schengen area.

- **25 August 2008** Unemployment in July totalled 5,958, down by 374 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It explained that there were 5,272 unemployed in Malta and 686 in Gozo. In the 12 months to July 2008, Malta experienced a decline of 428 in unemployment, whereas Gozo saw an increase of 54.
- **26 August 2008** The average rate of inflation in Malta over the past 12 months was 3.3 percent, exactly the same as the EU, the Finance Ministry said. Only one EU member state which joined the bloc with or after Malta had a lower rate – Slovakia which had 3.1%, the ministry said.
- **26 August 2008** The Entitlement Unit within the Health Department has, since 2006, issued 150,000 E-111 cards, including 28,000 this year. The Parliamentary Secretary for Health, told a news conference that 4,600 cards were issued between July 15 and August 14.
- **27 August 2008** A total of 817,662 nights were spent in collective accommodation establishments in June, an 8.8 percent rise over the corresponding month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 August 2008** Income generated by the agricultural sector last year is estimated to have amounted to €63.2 million, up marginally by 0.8 percent when compared to 2006, as a result of contrasting developments within the agricultural sector, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 August 2008** South street and St John Street in Valletta have become pedestrian zones as from 1st September 2008, said Transport Minister Austin Gatt after an announcement with Vince Farrugia, director-general of the GRTU. Talks included the hours during which delivery vans would be able to enter to supply the shops.
- **29 August 2008** The Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs said this afternoon that the criteria by which illegal immigrants are released from detention are already very well defined and all such persons have to go through a set procedure before being assessed as “vulnerable persons” and thus released.
- **29 August 2008** The government's financial deficit widened by €74.6 million to €283.5 million in the first seven months of the year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **29 August 2008** Tourist arrivals grew by 1.2 percent to reach 149,491 in July, the National Statistics Office said. The average length of stay was 10.0 nights, up by 0.3 nights when compared to July 2007.
- **30 August 2008** Vodafone and Go Mobile have introduced cheaper roaming rates, in line with the EU Roaming Regulation. The new rates are valid for calls originating and terminating in an EU state.
- **31 August 2008** Pope Benedict called for an effective political solution to deal with the human problems of illegal immigration from Africa to Europe. He referred to the Malta incident which happened the week before in which some 70 African migrants went missing and were believed killed in the central Mediterranean when their rubber boat capsized. He said that European

countries have a duty to protect the human needs of immigrants and all immigrants should respect national law.

- **31 August 2008** The Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs stood by its decision to appoint former prisons head Mr Manwel Cassar to head an independent board to investigate alleged shortcomings at the prisons.

SEPTEMBER

- **1 September 2008** Official statistics indicate a substantial decline in the number of illegal immigrants brought ashore last month in comparison to July. On the other hand, the figure is still higher than any other August while July had the highest figure of any month on record. According to a government headcount, the total number of illegal immigrants brought ashore last month was 505, that is 289 fewer than the preceding month's 794.
- **2 September 2008** Mobile telephone subscriptions reached 374,507 at the end of June, equivalent to almost 91 percent of the population, the National Statistics Office said. Contract-based mobile telephone subscriptions were recorded at 44,287, while card-plan subscriptions reached 330,220.
- **2 September 2008** August was cooler than average even though the mean air temperature last month was 0.1°C higher than the 30-year mean average for August, the Meteorological Office said.
- **3 September 2008** Speaking at the launch of the DMC quality seal, Parliamentary Secretary Mario de Marco said the business segment, of which conference and incentive travel (CIT) was the main component, accounted for 89,811 tourist arrivals with CIT generating 61,200 arrivals. Conference and business travellers to Malta spent an average of €800 per trip (€165.69 per night), nearly three times more than the leisure traveller.
- **3 September 2008** Education Minister Dolores Cristina told a press conference that the University of Malta is set to benefit most from €41.4 million in European Union funding allocated for the education and cultural sectors in Malta for the period 2007-2013.
- **3 September 2008** The economy continued to grow by over three percent in the second quarter of this year, according to Finance Minister Tonio Fenech.
- **5 September 2008** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) said that it determined 336 development applications in August and received 428 new applications. The net pending caseload at the end of the month was 4,921.
- **5 September 2008** Malta imported €110 million worth of cars in the three years between 2005 and 2007, according to statistics published by Eurostat.
- **5 September 2008** It is estimated that out of an elderly population in Malta of 52,128, a good 4,000 suffer from dementia and the number of people suffering from the condition will be nearly doubled within 20 years as worldwide progress in the health sector increases longevity. These figures emerged during a number of training courses organised by the Ministry for Social Policy and the Secretariat for the Elderly and Community Care for persons interested in dementia care.

- **6 September 2008** Provisional estimates indicate that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the second quarter of this year increased by 6.2 percent at market prices and by 3.2 percent in real terms when compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 September 2008** Malta celebrated Victory Day, recalling the victories of the Great Siege of 1565 and the Second World War. The President headed the congregation at Pontifical Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral after inspecting an AFM Guard. The traditional regatta was held in the Grand Harbour.
- **9 September 2008** The number of Maltese going abroad rose by 3.5 percent in July to reach 36,175, the National Statistics Office said.
- **10 September 2008** Outbound Maltese tourists during July are estimated at 36,175, meaning an increase of 3.5 percent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. Of these, 83.9 percent travelled by air and 31,041 visited EU destinations, mostly Italy and the UK.
- **11 September 2008** Provisional data for international trade show that the visible trade gap in July stood at €142.4 million, up by €0.9 million over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **12 September 2008** Tourist arrivals and guests nights in the second quarter increased by 11.4 percent and 4.7 percent respectively, according to the BOV Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association survey, meaning a growth of 15 percent and 7.7 percent for the first six months over 2007. At 557,000, tourist arrivals in the first six months were the highest in the last six years, the survey showed.
- **12 September 2008** The labour supply increased by 2,526 persons in April over the same month in 2007, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **13 September 2008** Airport passenger movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights during August increased marginally when compared to the same month last year, Malta International Airport said. Total passenger movements in August reached 390,566, an increase of 2,324, or 0.6 percent on the same month last year. Aircraft movements decreased by 3.2 percent for a total of 2,996.
- **15 September 2008** After attending an EU economic affairs ministers' meeting in Nice, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said that while one was concerned that the current economic turmoil abroad could have a negative impact on Malta, wise and concerted action by the government and the social partners could enable Malta to successfully face the challenges and maintain economic growth.
- **15 September 2008** Labour costs in Malta in the second quarter of this year rose by 1.8 percent from the same quarter of last year - the second lowest increase in the European Union.
- **16 September 2008** A total of €120 million in EU funds are being made available to the tourism industry up to 2013, Parliamentary Secretary Mario de Marco said. He told a press conference at the Aviation Museum that Malta up to last year had used €12m in EU funds for tourism-related projects including the building of new facilities for tourism studies in Gozo, restoration of historical

sites including Greek's Gate and the Roman Villa and improved facilities for divers.

- **16 September 2008** The 12-month moving rate of inflation climbed to 3.7 percent in August from 3.3 percent in July, figures issued this morning by the National Statistics Office show.
- **18 September 2008** Speaking during a national conference in the run-up to the budget for 2009, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech promised to continue the simplification of regulations, red tape and bureaucracy that was hindering the operations of small and medium enterprises on a daily basis.
- **19 September 2008** The latest Government and Eurostat figures showed that the annual rate of inflation in Malta was almost twice that of the eurozone during the same period, the opposition spokesman on finance said. The figures showed Malta's annual rate of inflation at 6.8 percent.
- **21 September 2008** Malta has the highest rate of employment in hotels and restaurants in the economy compared with the EU's 27 member states, according to Eurostat figures. In Europe, more than nine million people are directly employed in tourism-related activities, with Malta emerging top with 8.3 percent of jobs held within this sector.
- **22 September 2008** The number of cruise passengers who visited Malta dipped by 4.4 percent last month compared to August 2007 and reached 76,646, the National Statistics Office said.
- **23 September 2008** The foundation stone of a private industrial zone for over 70 SMEs was laid by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech at Ta'Maggi near Zabbar. The zone will cover 10,000 square metres and incorporate 78 workshops.
- **23 September 2008** Malta slipped three places in the index of perceived corruption in the public sector compiled by Transparency International. The 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of 180 countries places Malta in 36th place with Botswana and Puerto Rico.
- **23 September 2008** The government will be providing financial assistance to the National Council of Disabled Persons and the Foundation for Information Technology Access to make IT and communication accessible to the disabled. This was announced by Communications Minister Austin Gatt during an event involving the last group among 270 people benefitting from the Smart Start scheme.
- **24 September 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi left for New York where he will be addressing the United Nations General Assembly. While at the UN he held meetings with a number of prime ministers and presidents. Dr Gonzi, who is accompanied by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, will travel to Toronto where he will meet the Maltese community.
- **25 September 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli called on employers to cooperate more with the authorities in their efforts to combat illegal employment. Speaking at a breakfast meeting on the employment of foreign workers organised by the Malta Employers' Association, Mr Dalli admitted that the labour market was facing problems because of illegally-employed people.

- **26 September 2008** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech urged financial services practitioners to continue acting responsibly in order to improve trust among market operators. Speaking at a conference organised by the Malta Association of Credit Management and the Chamber of Advocates, the minister expressed his satisfaction that Malta's financial services laws were being respected and implemented.
- **26 September 2008** The shortfall between government recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first eight months of the year amounted to €260.4 million an increase of €96.2 million when compared to the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 September 2008** The overall occupancy rate in collective accommodation establishments went down by 5.3 percent in July over the comparative month in 2007, to stand at 82.2 percent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **26 September 2008** The Retail Price Index went down fractionally in August, primarily reflecting a drop of 6.64 percent in the prices of clothing and footwear, the National Statistics office said.
- **26 September 2008** The registered unemployed numbered 6,121 in August, a drop of 469 persons when compared to the corresponding month a year ago, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 September 2008** Total nights spent in collective accommodation establishments in July this year were recorded at 1,014,582, a decrease of 8.1 percent over the corresponding month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **28 September 2008** More effort should be made to create a closer link between the tourism sector and climate change awareness, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism Mario de Marco said. Speaking during a tree-planting ceremony at Hastings Gardens in Valletta, Dr de Marco said that the tourism sector had experienced a positive year so far, keeping in mind the 12 percent increase in the tourism industry for the first six months.
- **29 September 2008** Parliament resumed after the summer recess.
- **29 September 2008** Günter Gloser, Germany's Minister for European Affairs, arrived in Malta for a two-day visit. Mr Gloser met Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici and the chairman of Parliament's Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Michael Frendo.
- **30 September 2008** Tourism arrivals increased by 1.2 percent in August, despite a drop of almost 16 percent in the all important UK market, figures issued by the National Statistics Office showed.
- **30 September 2008** A provisional balance of payments statement for the second quarter of this year shows a deterioration in the current account balance of €123.3 million, from a net deficit of €46 million during the June 2007 quarter to one of €169.2 million, the National Statistics Office said.

OCTOBER

- **1 October 2008** Rainfall over Malta last month was above the average for the past 30 years, but it was also slightly warmer, the Meteorological Office at Malta International Airport said.
- **1 October 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi started a series of meetings with the employees of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as part of the MEPA reform process.
- **1 October 2008** Tourist departures last month are estimated at 178,570, implying a rise of 1.2 percent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **1 October 2008** The EU Pact for Immigration and Asylum and the challenges that illegal immigration is posing for Malta were discussed by Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici and Gunter Closer, Germany's Minister of State for Europe.
- **2 October 2008** Speaking at a meeting of the EU's Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said that an EU proposal for a directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, was premature.
- **4 October 2008** Out of 1,444 cases concluded last year by the Directorate of Investigation into benefit fraud, there were 1,045 that were found to have been receiving social security benefits they were not entitled to, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a Parliamentary question.
- **5 October 2008** The country could not continue subsidising industry's water and electricity although it could help it invest in energy conservation methods, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said during a dialogue meeting in Victoria which mainly discussed water and electricity tariffs. Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt and Finance Minister Tonio Fenech also participated.
- **6 October 2008** There were 581 postponed or cancelled elective operations at Mater Dei Hospital between December 2007 and last March, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **6 October 2008** There are currently 243 children under care orders, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 October 2008** During the first six months of the year, the Joint Office received 5,360 applications for the redemption of emphytheusis or purchase of residential property, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in answer to a parliamentary question.
- **6 October 2008** The total amount of pending bills that government departments had with the Water Services Corporation and Enemalta Corporation as at July 3, 2008, amounted to €2.1 million and €10.8 million respectively. The information was given by Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 October 2008** A total of 54 children have been arraigned in court for various reasons during the first eight months of the year. The information was given by Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **7 October 2008** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech attended the Economic and Finance Ministers' council in Luxembourg where the global financial crisis and its impacts on the European economy were discussed.
- **7 October 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli ordered a costing exercise at Mater Dei Hospital and set new tariffs for foreign patients. The minister said that the current charges were €256.23 daily for a bed in a general ward; €489.17 daily for a bed in the high-dependency unit; and €931.75 daily for a bed in intensive care. The minister was replying to a parliamentary question.
- **8 October 2008** Social Policy Minister John Dalli appealed to the Maltese to curb consumption in the face of the global economic meltdown, forget about subsidies and spend only what they can afford. Speaking in Parliament during the second reading of the Malta Freeports (Amendment) Bill, Mr Dalli said the Maltese must get used to moving with the times, even where prices were concerned.
- **8 October 2008** There are 37 favourable recommendations of the Commission Against Injustices, dating back to 1989, that have not been implemented, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **9 October 2008** The labour supply in May increased by 2,271 persons when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 October 2008** Speaking at a seminar which grouped people involved in this area from across the EU, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg said that besides integration and burden-sharing, a third option for dealing with the migrants situation was to take a firm stand against irregular migration and insist on the expeditious repatriation of immigrants who do not satisfy the requirements for protection under the Geneva Convention .
- **9 October 2008** The total number of foster carers in Malta and Gozo is currently 140, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in Parliament.
- **9 October 2008** The number of patients on the waiting lists for various surgical interventions are 1,801 for MRI scan, 305 for anterior cruciate repair, 626 for total hip replacement and 3,545 for knee arthroscopy (cartilage). Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **9 October 2008** Between January and September this year the police started criminal proceedings against four people for cruelty to animals, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **9 October 2008** Since the coming into effect of local enforcement, local councils in Malta and Gozo have been paid a total of just over €44 million, while €10.54 million are still pending. The information was given by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi answering a parliamentary question.
- **10 October 2008** Wardens issued a total of 55,642 tickets between April and June this year, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in Parliament.
- **10 October 2008** Customs has since 2005 confiscated 20.9 kilogrammes of cocaine, 26.8 kilogrammes of heroin, 75,715 restricted or controlled pills, more than 140 million cigarettes, of which 73 million were counterfeits and 142

containers with counterfeit goods. Finance Minister Tonio Fenech gave the information in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **10 October 2008** A total of 692 persons were injured in traffic accidents in the first seven months of this year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **10 October 2008** In the four years between 2002 and 2006, there were 6,892 reported cases of cancer, Social Development Minister John Dalli said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **10 October 2008** A total of 2,000 weapons were licensed this year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **10 October 2008** Official Visit by his Excellency Mr Kostas Karamanlis Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic.
- **11 October 2008** The number of people caught working illegally this year, up to the end of August, was 1,257, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a parliamentary question
- **11 October 2008** The visible trade gap in August increased by €8.3 million to €102.8 million over the same period last year, according to provisional data for international trade released by the National Statistics Office.
- **11 October 2008** In the past three years, 244 care orders were issued, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while replying to parliamentary questions.
- **11 October 2008** A total of €14.7 million were collected in registration tax of second hand cars imported up to September 26 this year. The registration tax on new cars imported in the same period amounted to €23.1 million, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to parliamentary questions.
- **11 October 2008** The costs of the National Philharmonic Orchestra amount to €1.5 million a year, Education Minister Dolores Cristina said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **12 October 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi attended an emergency summit at the Elysée Palace in Paris called abruptly by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The meeting for leaders of the 15-member eurozone drew up a joint action plan to tackle the financial crisis, the French President's office said.
- **13 October 2008** Sea transport between Malta and Gozo registered slight decreases in commuters and in trips in the third quarter of this year, the National Statistics Office said. Commuters decreased by 0.3 percent to 1,302,093 when compared to the same period in 2007. Conversely, the number of vehicles carried by scheduled vessels went up by two percent, totalling 331,334.
- **13 October 2008** A total of 32 out of 9,342 people taking an HIV test up to the end of August this year were found to be positive, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **13 October 2008** There were 5,544 patients on the waiting list for a cataract operation up to the end of last July, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **14 October 2008** The number of Maltese going abroad in August amounted to 37,337, an increase of 4.2 percent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 October 2008** Households spent an estimated €560.8 million on food last year, the National Statistics Office said in a digest of statistics to mark World Food Day.
- **17 October 2008** Airport passenger movements during September decreased by 1.2 percent when compared to the same month in 2007, the Malta International Airport said.
- **17 October 2008** Total tax revenue last year amounted to €1,889.2 million, implying a tax burden of 34.9 percent, up from 33.8 percent in the previous year, National Statistics Office figures issued show.
- **18 October 2008** Up to the third week of September, the Petitions Board received 30,124 petitions protesting against traffic tickets issued by wardens, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **18 October 2008** Tax revenue last year increased by 9.8 percent, or €190 million, over the previous year, amounting to €1,889.2 million, the National Statistics Office said.
- **20 October 2008** Since the points system was introduced into Malta, 51 drivers have had their licences revoked, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **21 October 2008** The number of cruise passengers coming to Malta rose by 12,339 (19.1%) in September to reach 76,812, when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **21 October 2008** During July and August there was a drop of 8.1 percent over the same period last year in the number of people calling at the Mater Dei Hospital emergency department, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **21 October 2008** Last year there were 29,569 persons benefiting from subsidies or exemption from paying the surcharge on water and electricity bills. There are, this year, 27,918 beneficiaries Social Policy Minister John Dalli said.
- **21 October 2008** There are 655 cases of both genders on the waiting list for admission to St Vincent de Paul Residence and 68 for admission to the Cospicua home, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **22 October 2008** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi left for Beijing, China, where he took part in the Asia-Europe Meeting. Dr Gonzi is accompanied by Malta's Ambassador to China, Karl Xuereb, the deputy head of the Prime Minister's secretariat Leonard Callus and the Maltese Permanent Representative to the EU, Stephen Borg.

- **23 October 2008** Between 2005 and 2007, there were 31 cases of rape, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici told Parliament in answer to a parliamentary question.
- **23 October 2008** The departure tax collected between January and September amounted to €4,730,969. The information was given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **24 October 2008** Malta and Cyprus agreed to collaborate within the EU on the implementation of the recently signed Immigration and Asylum Pact. The pact was discussed during talks which Justice and Minister Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici held in Nicosia with Cypriot Interior Minister Neoclis Sylikiotis.
- **24 October 2008** The number of licensed motor vehicles rose by 2,235 in the third quarter of 2008, to stand at 294,155, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 October 2008** The retail price index rose by almost one percent last month, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **25 October 2008** There were 1,038 non-fatal accidents at work between July and September, a 12 percent decline over the same period of last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 October 2008** Almost 295,000 vehicles had a licence to drive on Maltese roads by the end of September, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **26 October 2008** Over 650 Maltese people needed the assistance of the country's embassies abroad so far this year, statistics released by the Foreign Affairs Ministry show.
- **27 October 2008** Unemployment last month reached 6,096 persons, a decreased of 533 from September 2007, the National Statistics Office said. Unemployment in August was 6,121.
- **27 October 2008** Italian Interior Minister Roberto Maroni arrived in Malta for talks with the Prime Minister and with Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici.
- **29 October 2008** Catches of Lampuki dropped in Malta but almost doubled in Gozo in the third quarter of this year, compared to the same period last year, figures issued show. The National Statistics Office said that overall, Lampuki catches were up 3.3 percent. But while in Malta landings of Dorado (lampuki) fell by 32.7 percent, in Gozo they were up by 92.5 percent.
- **29 October 2008** Tourist accommodation saw a 3.1 percent drop in the occupancy rate this August when compared to last year, according to National Statistics Office figures.
- **30 October 2008** The number of traffic accidents between July and September decreased by 413 when compared to the same months last year, to reach 3,798, but the roads saw six fatalities compared to four in the same months last year. There were also 328 other casualties.
- **31 October 2008** The government deficit in the first nine months of the year amounted to €258.3 million, €87.6 million more than in the same months last year, the National Statistics Office said. Government debt increased by

€270.6m (8.3 percent) by the end of September compared to the end of September last year.

NOVEMBER

1 November 2008 Tourist arrivals in September dropped by 2.7 percent when compared to the same month last year, but the total number of nights spent on the islands rose by 2.6 percent, the National Statistics Office said.

1 November 2008 Malta's unemployment rate in September was nearly two percentage points below the eurozone average, according to new statistics published by Eurostat. Continuing its downward trend, the jobless figure fell to 5.6 percent among all those willing to work, down slightly from 5.7 percent in August and almost one percentage point below the previous September's 6.4 percent.

1 November 2008 Government debt stood at €3,518.1 million at the end of September, an increase of €270.6 million compared to the same period last year, according to the National Statistics Office.

1 November 2008 Fish sales increased by 13.2 percent between July and September when compared to the same period last year, mostly due to larger catches of blue fin tuna, swordfish and lampuki. The National Statistics Office said fresh fish landings amounted to 304,186 kilograms. This was due to higher landings of swordfish (+43.7 percent), blue fin tuna (+57.1 percent) and lampuki (+3.3 percent).

1 November 2008 The number of people in full-time jobs rose by 3,426 in the year leading up to last June, while unemployment fell by 476, latest statistics show.

2 November 2008 Donations from Maltese missionary societies to poor countries increased by around €30,000 this year, statistics obtained by the Pontifical Mission Society show. To date, €1,104,584 has been donated to 13 missionary nations whereas €1,075,403 was raised in 2007.

3 November 2008 The average temperature in October was 21.1°C, which was 0.4°C cooler than the recorded average during the past 30 years, the Meteorological Office at the Malta International Airport said.

3 November 2008 The budget for 2009 was presented by the Hon. Dr. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment.

4 November 2008 Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici discussed coordinated action by the four EU Mediterranean countries during talks in Athens with Greek Minister for the Interior Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

5 November 2008 Communications Minister Austin Gatt signed the Blue Med Declaration on the creation of a Mediterranean Functional Airspace Block (FAB), which is expected to optimise air-traffic routes and thus leading to lower emissions and cost savings for airlines. The Blue Med Declaration was signed in Rome, between Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, with Albania, Egypt and Tunisia signing as participating states, while Jordan signed as an observer.

6 November 2008 The supply of fresh fruit and vegetables rose by 9.9 percent in the third quarter of this year, while the wholesale value declined by 11 percent to €4.92 million, the National Statistics Office said.

7 November 2008 Malta signed a double taxation agreement with Montenegro. The agreement was signed by Foreign Affairs Minister Tonio Borg and his Montenegrin counterpart, Mila Rocen, in Marseilles during a meeting of Foreign Ministers.

7 November 2008 A good crop of potatoes resulted in a nearly 10 percent rise in the volume of fruit and vegetables grown locally between July and September compared to the same period last year. The potato yield grew 73 percent, pushing up the fruit and vegetable total to 14.53 million kilogrammes.

8 November 2008 The visible trade gap grew by €74.5 million to €159.6 million in September compared to the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that the value of imports rose by €64 million and exports fell by €10.5 million in value.

11 November 2008 President Edward Fenech Adami left for a two-day state visit to Portugal accompanied by Mrs Fenech Adami.

12 November 2008 Around 30,445 Maltese are estimated to have gone abroad by air and sea in September, up from 29,331 in the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that 26,308 travelled to EU destinations, mostly Italy and the UK. Most were aged between 25 and 44.

12 November 2008 Multilingualism Commissioner Leonard Orban arrived in Malta for a three day-visit to discuss further collaboration on the development of Maltese as one of the 23 official languages.

13 November 2008 A memorandum of understanding to foster further business co-operation and facilitate the exchange of information has been signed between Malta Enterprise and the Commercial Association of Porto. The memorandum was signed during President Edward Fenech Adami's official visit to Portugal, where he was accompanied by a Maltese business delegation.

14 November 2008 State visit to Malta by their excellencies Ms Quentin Bryce AC Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Mr Michael Bryce AM AE.

14 November 2008 The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices jumped to 112.05 points in October from 110.98 in September, the National Statistics Office said.

14 November 2008 Maltese tourism can weather the storm gathering as a result of the international financial crisis if stakeholders and the government work together, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism Mario de Marco said. He was speaking at the 2008 World Travel Market held this week in London.

15 November 2008 Inflation on the island hit 5.8 percent last month, the highest in the eurozone.

15 November 2008 Ambassadors Walter Balzan and Sean O'Huiginn signed a convention between Malta and Ireland for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

16 November 2008 President Edward Fenech Adami left for Cyprus at the invitation of the Cypriot Archbishop Chrysostomos II and the Comunita' di Sant'Egidio. He attended an international meeting for peace entitled 'The Civilisation of Peace: Faiths

and Churches in Dialogue', organised jointly by the Church of Cyprus and the Comunita' di Sant'Egidio in Nicosia.

18 November 2008 Passenger movements at Malta International Airport dropped by 6.1 percent last month when compared to the same month in 2007, with a total of 279,946 passengers handled, down by 18,319 Malta International Airport said.

18 November 2008 Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi met trade unions to discuss the new water and electricity tariffs. He also held a separate meeting on the same subject with the Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises.

19 November 2008 Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi launched a code of ethics for board directors in the public sector, a corporate governance framework for public sector entities and a national anti-fraud and corruption strategy. Speaking in Parliament, Dr Gonzi said the three documents were in line with the commitment on good governance made by the government at the opening of the legislature.

20 November 2008 Malta managed to more than halve its level of state aid since joining the EU, although it is still considered to be above average. Malta's level of state aid in the various sectors last year fell to just 0.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product, less than half the 2004 levels of 1.4 percent, according to the 2007 State Aid Scoreboard just published in Brussels.

21 November 2008 The Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco, in a frank speech to hoteliers outlined the problems facing tourism and the actions which need to be taken for the industry to at least maintain this year's arrivals figures for next year. He told the annual meeting of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association that tourism to Malta this year performed better than the European average and better than most if not all direct competitors.

21 November 2008 Tourists spent €854.7 million in the first nine months of the year, a slight increase over last year's €854.4 million, the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco said in Parliament.

22 November 2008 Cruise passenger traffic in October increased by 14,535 passengers over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

23 November 2008 Fourteen Gozitan local councils signed the Aalborg Charter committing themselves to working together to become sustainable localities in line with this European framework. The councils also agreed to promote their individual traditions and values.

24 November 2008 A series of University graduation ceremonies with the graduation of students from post-graduate courses started. The ceremonies continue until December 9, with the ceremonies for postgraduates being held in Valletta and those for undergraduates at tal-Qroqq.

24 November 2008 The number of people registering for work reached 6,351 last month, a decrease of 308 persons when compared to the same month last year but an increase of 255 over September.

25 November 2008 Visits to museums and historical sites in Malta and Gozo increased by six percent last year to total 2,055,357, the National Statistics Office said.

25 November 2008 Social Policy Minister John Dalli attended a meeting with the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, where he updated the social partners on the outcome of the public consultation process.

26 November 2008 Occupancy in hotels and other tourist establishments declined by 4.4 percent in September when compared to the corresponding month last year, the National Statistic Office said.

26 November 2008 Between January and October, the police initiated criminal proceedings against 241 persons over offences relating to domestic violence.

26 November 2008 Climate change created economic opportunities with 43 new companies dealing in renewable energy registered in the past three months, Resources Minister George Pullicino said.

26 November 2008 Democracy, which guaranteed the free market, has to be accompanied by a sense of fairness and justice in the commercial sector, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici told Parliament while introducing a Bill to amend the Malta Standards Authority Act.

26 November 2008 Answering parliamentary questions, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said the police were due €47.79 for extra duties carried out in 2005, €5,739.06 for work carried out in 2006 and €15,153.57 for work done in 2007.

27 November 2008 Tourism dropped by 9.3 percent last month compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

27 November 2008 Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated the world's first purpose-built ePassport production facility at Bulebel. The 2,600-square-metre plant, built by De La Rue adjacent to its banknote printing facility, will print and assemble machine-readable and biometric passports.

27 November 2008 Malta needs to diversify its touristic product, focusing more on traditional aspects of typically Maltese culture, the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco said while speaking during a visit to the Limestone Heritage attraction in Siġġiewi.

27 November 2008 Accommodation establishments saw a drop of 4.4 percent in the occupancy rate in September when compared to the same period last year, according to the National Statistics Office.

28 November 2008 The government's shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure of for the first 10 months of the year amounted to €243.2 million the National Statistics Office said.

28 November 2008 The sales of manufacturing enterprises in the third quarter stood at €557.8 million, a decrease of €44.1 million (7.3 percent) when compared to the same period in 2007, a sample survey by the National Statistics Office found.

29 November 2008 Over a quarter of complaints received by the Ombudsman this year were related to the army. According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, 164 of 660 cases concerned the Armed Forces of Malta, 44 to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority and 36 to the Malta Transport Authority.

DECEMBER

1 December 2008 Malta's ratio of workers for every pensioner is four to one Social Policy Minister John Dalli said, making a case for urgent action on the matter. He was speaking at a seminar on the sustainability of social services.

2 December 2008 A total 10,291 persons were registered as having a disability last year, the National Statistics Office said.

3 December 2008 The Malta Civil Aviation Register is to be developed next year and could evolve into an important sector for the economy, similar to the ship register, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said when he presented an air operations certificate to the Swiss company Comlux Aviation, which has chosen Malta as its base for private charters.

3 December 2008 A total 29 rape reports were received by the police in the first 11 months of this year, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.

4 December 2008 The number of mobile telephone subscriptions as at the end of September reached 381,955, the National Statistics Office said.

4 December 2008 Malta Shipyards imported 2,545 foreign workers for just a few days each on an ad hoc basis, which meant they were considered as casual workers, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.

4 December 2008 There were a total of 6,061 self-employed who fell behind in their NI contributions, 5,553 in Malta and 508 in Gozo. Finance Minister Tonio Fenech divulged the figures when answering a parliamentary question.

4 December 2008 There were 4,937 senior citizens who fell victim to crime between January 1, 2006, and October 31, 2008, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.

5 December 2008 More than €325 million were invested in councils in the past 15 years, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking during a visit to the Local Government Department.

5 December 2008 Meat production increased by 334 tonnes in the third quarter this year, the National Statistics Office said.

5 December 2008 The number of internet subscriptions rose from eight percent in a year to reach 26.2 per 100 people. Giving statistics for the third quarter, the National Statistics Office said that compared to the same period last year, the number of broadband users has increased by 37.2 percent while narrowband connections have gone down by 31.9 percent.

6 December 2008 The University of Malta should have closer ties with industry to cater for the latter's needs, Education Minister Dolores Cristina stressed while speaking during a meeting for directors of European lifelong-learning agencies.

6 December 2008 Meat production increased by 10.1 percent between July and September over the same period last year, according to the National Statistics Office.

7 December 2008 US Senator John McCain, the former Republican presidential hopeful, arrived in Malta for a two-day visit during which he met Prime Minister the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi.

8 December 2008 Domestic used batteries collected over the past two years amounted to 9.49 tonnes in 2007 and 10.82 tonnes so far in 2008. Answering a parliamentary question, Resources Minister George Pullicino said the collection of batteries from local councils, schools and shops cost around €1,160 a month.

8 December 2008 The Prime Minister addressed around 450 councillors at Castille to mark 15 years since the setting up of local councils.

9 December 2008 Malta's gross domestic product for the third quarter this year increased by 2.2 percent in real terms when compared to the same period last year the National Statistics Office said.

9 December 2008 Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi met his Czech counterpart Mirek Topolanik in Prague.

10 December 2008 Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi had a breakfast meeting with business leaders in Prague where he underlined Malta's strong business relations with the Arab world.

10 December 2008 The full-time gainfully occupied population in July increased by 3,574 while unemployment decreased by 374 when compared to the same month last year, according to labour market data provided by the Employment and Training Corporation.

10 December 2008 The visible trade gap has shrunk by €103.3 million in October this year, compared to the same month last year, preliminary figures released by the National Statistics Office show.

10 December 2008 Five schemes aimed at assisting industry over the next five years were launched by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech. The schemes are worth a total of €20 million. Mr Fenech said that the schemes are aimed at encouraging investment and growth in industry.

12 December 2008 Producer prices for agricultural output in the third quarter of this year decreased by three percent while the input prices increased by 20.5 percent, the National Statistics Office said.

12 December 2008 The Maltese travelled more in October, with estimates implying an increase of 21.7 percent over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

12 December 2008 There were 29 fatal traffic accidents between January last year and November this year, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while replying to a parliamentary question.

13 December 2008 Diplomatic relations were established between Malta and the Republic of Niger. The protocol establishing Relations was signed by Saviour F. Borg, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary and permanent representative of Malta to the United Nations, and by Aboubacar Ibrahim Abani, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary and permanent representative of the Republic of Niger to the United Nations.

13 December 2008 Malta celebrated Republic Day. Official celebrations started with an Armed Forces of Malta march along Republic Street to St George's Square in

Valletta, where a parade was held. Following the parade, an investiture and medal-giving ceremony took place at the Grand Council Chamber at the Palace in Valletta.

14 December 2008 Prime Minister and Mrs Gonzi spent time with residents and workers at the Dar tal-Providenza during a tour of the home. Dr Gonzi spoke on the need to recognise people who worked with the disabled and thanked all helpers and workers at the home for their "unseen" work.

14 December 2008 Police made record seizures of cocaine and cannabis in 2008. Statistics show that there was a 700 percent increase in the seizure of cocaine compared to 2007, and an 873 percent increase in the seizure of cannabis resin.

14 December 2008 The Water Services Corporation issued almost €15,000 worth of fines for water theft in the past 10 months, according to a statement issued by the Water Services Corporation.

16 December 2008 Foreign Ministers from EU Mediterranean countries have agreed to adopt a coordinated approach in order to make the Mediterranean more visible within the European Union's policies and actions. The ministers, known as the Olive Group, represented Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Slovenia, met in Taormina in Sicily. Foreign Minister Tonio Borg said the ministers had underlined their intention to ensure that the Mediterranean dimension featured on the Union's political agenda. He also insisted that Europe had to speak with one voice and negotiate a fresh agreement with Libya.

16 December 2008 Portfolio investment assets held abroad by entities resident in Malta were estimated at €10.6 billion as at the end of December 2007, the National Statistics Office said.

17 December 2008 The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices dropped to 108.66 from 112.00 in November from October, the National Statistics Office said.

17 December 2008 Speaking during a seminar on the economy organised by the Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said that in the current international climate it makes sense more than ever to stimulate the economy through capital projects, and referred to over €200 million worth of roads, beaches and schools which are awaiting Mepa's approval.

17 December 2008 The majority of households in Malta, 62.6 percent, have a computer, according to the latest survey of the National Statistics Office.

18 December 2008 Passenger movements at Malta International Airport decreased by 8 percent in November when compared to the same month in 2007, Malta International Airport said. A total of 175,906 movements were handled, meaning that the shortfall was of 15,349 passenger movements on the scheduled and non-scheduled flights.

18 December 2008 Malta and Switzerland signed a double taxation avoidance agreement during an official visit to Malta by Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey.

18 December 2008 Italy donated 1,100 trees to Malta that will be planted at the Foresta 2000 park in Mellieħa. The trees were presented to the Minister of Resources and Rural Affairs, George Pullicino by the Italian Ambassador to Malta, Paolo Andrea Trabalza during a ceremony at the Biotechnology Centre in Lija.

19 December 2008 A total 62.5 percent of enterprises employing 10 or more full-time employees have a website, a survey on ICT usage by enterprises this year revealed. The National Statistics Office said that the vast majority of enterprises employing 10 or more full-time workers made use of a computer.

19 December 2008 The Retail Price Index decreased to 118.97 last month from 119.34 in October, the National Statistics Office said.

22 December 2008 Unemployment grew by almost 300 between October and November but dropped slightly when compared to November 2008, figures issued by the National Statistics Office show.

23 December 2008 Cruise passengers last month numbered 44,441, a drop of 12,925 passengers over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said.

24 December 2008 Overall occupancy in collective accommodation establishments in October went down by 4.9 percent when compared to the same month last year.

26 December 2008 The government's shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure for the first 11 months of this year amounted to €271 million, the National Statistics Office said.

27 December 2008 This Christmas saw a 52 percent increase in the amount of packages shipped to Malta over the same period last year, with books, DVDs and CDs topping the list of the most popular items, according to Maltapost.

29 December 2008 Malta signed a double taxation convention with Libya, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg said. Following the signings earlier this year with Ireland, Montenegro and Switzerland, this is the fourth such convention to be signed this year. Its aim is to avoid double taxation and prevent fiscal evasion. It covers direct taxes on income and capital and enables both countries to exchange information for a more effective stand against tax evasion.

29 December 2008 There were 76,101 beneficiaries of services provided by NGOs in 2007, a survey by the National Statistics Office found.

30 December 2008 A total of 15 Maltese nationals lost their life while they were abroad this year, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg said.

30 December 2008 Inbound tourists last month numbered 73,608, a decrease of 10.8 percent when compared to the same month in 2007. The National Statistics Office said that year on year, total nights spent decreased by 14.6 percent.

30 December 2008 Gozo's contribution to the national gross domestic product at market prices is 5.8 percent, or €315.2 million, according to provisional estimates for last year. The National Statistics Office said that gross value added (GVA) for Malta grew by 6.8 percent.

31 December 2008 A record 1.3 million tourists are being estimated to have visited Malta this year, reflecting a four percent increase in the number arrivals over 2007. Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism Mario de Marco said that this number was 50,000 more tourists than last year.

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