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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 2009** The country's leaders received New Year greetings from well wishers - the President at the Palace in Valletta, the Prime Minister at Castille, the Opposition leader at the party's headquarters in Hamrun and the Archbishop at the Archbishop's Palace in Valletta.
- **1 January 2009** Over 3,000 immigrants were repatriated between 2004 and the end of November, including 968 Egyptians, a spokesman for the Home Affairs Ministry said.
- **2 January 2009** Tourism fell 10.8 percent in November when compared to the same month in 2007, the latest official statistics show.
- **3 January 2009** Industrial producer prices rose by 4.7 percent in October when compared with the previous month, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **6 January 2009** The past year saw April being one of the driest months in the past 84 years and July being slightly cooler and less humid than in the past 57 years, according to a 2008 review by the Meteorological Office.
- **7 January 2009** The active percentage of the population aged between 15 and 64 grew by one percent to reach 59.6 in the third quarter of last year, according to the results for the latest Labour Force Survey.
- **8 January 2009** There were 162,954 people in employment between July and September last year, a "statistically significant change" over the same period in 2007 when the figure stood at 157,667, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **8 January 2009** There were just two potential cases of measles in two years, a medical report called Measles In Europe found.
- **9 January 2009** Foreign Minister Tonio Borg attended the General Affairs Council (GAC) held in Prague between the Foreign Ministers of EU states.
- **9 January 2009** The visible trade gap in November stood at €101.0 million, down by €0.5 million compared to the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 January 2009** Gozo Channel ferried 3.94 million passengers and 1.06 million cars between the two islands, return trips included, making 2008 a record year.

- **12 January 2009** George Abela was officially nominated as Malta's eighth President, following consensus by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Opposition Leader Joseph Muscat.
- **13 January 2009** An aquaculture census carried out by the National Statistics Office last year showed that the gross output of the industry rose by 49.1 percent, from €86.4 million in 2006 to €128.8 million in 2007. The rise was mainly on account of an increase in the value of fish sold, which rose by 41.2 percent to €103.2 million in 2007.
- **13 January 2009** During the first nine months of last year, there were 8,761 applicants who took the driving test, of whom 1,931 passed on their first try, 1,199 on their second attempt and a declining number of others who tried more times, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **14 January 2009** More Maltese travelled last November than in the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that 21,512 Maltese residents departed by air and sea in November, an increase of 8.5 percent over the same month in 2007. Of these, 18,489 travelled to EU destinations, the most popular being the UK and Italy. 3,023 travelled to non-EU destinations. 93.7 percent travelled by air.
- **15 January 2009** MaltaPost reported a pre-tax profit of €2.90 million in the financial year which ended on September 30, up from a profit of €1.66 million last year.
- **15 January 2009** A document on the way forward on illegal immigration, prepared by Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Greece, is being discussed at a meeting of EU Home Affairs Ministers in Prague. During the debate, Home Affairs Minister Mifsud Bonnici insisted that migration was a problem of the Union as a whole and was not limited to the Mediterranean EU states.
- **15 January 2009** The increased number of illegal immigrants is putting extreme pressure on the accommodation capabilities as well as the social fabric of the Maltese islands, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg said while speaking at a seminar hosted by MEUSAC and the Czech embassy.
- **16 January 2009** The pilot boat Echo 1 was inaugurated by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. The Prime Minister welcomed the new investment by the Malta Maritime Pilots Cooperative saying it showed the determination and entrepreneurship of the Maltese investor.
- **16 January 2009** While exchanging New Year greetings with Malta's diplomatic corp., Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said that he hoped Malta will play a direct role towards the achievement of peace in the Middle East.
- **16 January 2009** The government registered a deficit of €50 million in the third quarter last year compared to a deficit of €36.4 million for the same quarter in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 January 2009** The number of church weddings remained stable last year with 1,564 couples tying the knot at the Archdiocese of Malta, the Curia said.

- **16 January 2009** Fish reared in farms rose by 49.1 percent in 2007 when compared to the previous year, according to latest figures by the National Statistics Office.
- **16 January 2009** Environment Minister George Pullicino told Parliament that only half the stock of vacant dwellings is available for floating on the rental market.
- **17 January 2009** Real income per farmer in Malta dropped by 12.8 percent in 2008 when compared to the previous year, according to the latest figures issued by Eurostat.
- **19 January 2009** Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco, insisted this morning that the Malta tourism product should highlight Malta's unique characteristics and not seek to copy what others were doing. He was speaking at the opening of a three-day seminar organised by the Tourism and Sustainable Development Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister in association with the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO).
- **20 January 2009** The number of traffic accidents in the fourth quarter of last year was down by 13 percent over the same period in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **20 January 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi held bilateral talks with the Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel during a three-day official visit in Germany.
- **20 January 2009** The Malta Resources Authority received a total of 2,643 applications for the registration of boreholes and streams following the latest registration scheme. The information was given by Resources and Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino in reply to a parliamentary question
- **20 January 2009** During 2007 and 2008 there were eight persons who were arraigned in the Gozo courts on charges of child abuse. The information was given by Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 January 2009** It is estimated that there are 72,700 people in Malta and Gozo who suffer from hypertension, and around 55,000 of them are receiving treatment for the condition, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **20 January 2009** To date, the courts have decided on 408 cases of abuse in the issue of boat driving licences, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 January 2009** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech told Parliament the government's revenue from VAT in the first 11 months of last year amounted to €448.255 million. He was answering a parliamentary question.
- **20 January 2009** Social Policy Minister John Dalli said there were 41 care orders issued between May and November 2008. Mr Dalli was answering a parliamentary question.
- **21 January 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, on an official visit to Germany, met the Premier of the metropolitan region of Hamburg, Ole von Beust, and a

business delegation. Trade exchanges and investment opportunities in Malta were discussed.

- **21 January 2009** The Retail Price Index increased to 119.12 last month from 118.97 in November, the National Statistics Office said. Malta also ended the year with a annual inflation rate of 4.93 percent, from 3.31 percent at the end of 2007, while the 12-month annual average of inflation was 4.26 percent (1.25 percent in December 2007).
- **21 January 2009** Cruise passenger traffic last year hit 555,840, surpassing 2007 by just under 14 percent, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **22 January 2009** According to National Office of Statistics estimates, the number of people aged over 60 is expected to be 113,583 by 2025 and 133,302 by 2050. The working population (aged from 16 to 64) is expected to be 273,235 and 249,161 respectively.
- **23 January 2009** Malta is to continue working with the European Commission for the burden sharing principle to be implemented in a practical and effective manner in the near future, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking during an exchange of New Year greetings with the consular corp.
- **23 January 2009** The full-time gainfully occupied population last August increased by 3,103 people while unemployment decreased by 469, when compared to August 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 January 2009** Prices increased by 0.13 percent in December over November, mostly because of more expensive fruits and vegetables, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 January 2009** The President and Mrs Fenech Adami left for Warsaw on an official visit. They are visiting Poland at the invitation of Polish President Lech Kaczynski and Mrs. Kaczynska. Foreign Minister Tonio Borg will join Dr Fenech Adami in Warsaw on the 26th. A business delegation is also accompanying the President.
- **26 January 2009** Hotel occupancy went down by 6.7 percent in November 2008 over the comparative month a year before, to stand at 39.9 percent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 January 2009** Tourist arrivals rose by 3.8 percent in the whole of last year but dropped by 12.4 percent in December, the National Statistics Office said.
- **27 January 2009** Education Minister Dolores Cristina launched a consultation document on a national policy and strategy for the attainment of core competences in primary education. She said that children were being lost along the way because they did not achieve the core competences of bilingual literacy, eLiteracy and numeracy. The new document identified the yardsticks which needed to be achieved, evaluation procedures and the assistance which needed to be given to pupils found to be in difficulty.
- **28 January 2009** A total of 13,096 newly-licensed vehicles hit Malta's roads last year and 8,718 were removed, National Statistics Office figures show.
- **28 January 2009** The price of fuel oil as used by Enemalta for its power plants has dropped by 39 percent since October, when the new energy bills were

introduced, according to figures obtained from a leading energy information provider.

- **29 January 2009** Considerably less dorado and swordfish were caught between last October and December bringing the amount of fish landings for the quarter down by 219,005 kilogrammes. The National Statistics Office said in a statement that Dorado catches dropped by 17.4 percent when compared to the same period in 2007 and swordfish catches by 16.9 percent.
- **31 January 2009** Around 68 percent of consumers have so far benefited from the eco reduction on their energy bills, according to figures released by the Water Services Corporation.

FEBRUARY

- **1 February 2009** The amount of rainfall last month was a record for January since records started being kept 85 years ago, the Metereological office at Malta International Airport said. Total rainfall amounted to 246.6mm. The previous January record was 225.6 mm in 1973.
- **2 February 2009** Five new jobs have to be generated for every one lost, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking at a political activity in Sannat, Gozo. He said employment is the number one priority for the government and this should not be overshadowed by issues.
- **3 February 2009** Non-fatal occupational accidents dropped by 17.5 percent in the last quarter of last year when compared to the corresponding period of 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **3 February 2009** The Chinese Minister of Culture, Cai Wu, arrived here on a four-day visit at the invitation of Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, in the first visit by a Chinese Minister of Culture to Malta.
- **3 February 2009** Social Policy Minister John Dalli told Parliament yesterday that the Health Promotion Department does not keep records of the incidence of Hepatitis B and C in illegal immigrants. The health authorities do not feel there are valid indications for illegal immigrants to be routinely tested for HIV, as is done for other infectious diseases. He was answering a parliamentary question.
- **3 February 2009** If a person transferring residence to Malta imports a vehicle that he or she has been using for more than two years, there will be no registration tax to pay. The exemption applies to not more than one vehicle belonging to the person transferring residence. The information was given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **3 February 2009** When a child is adopted from overseas, public officials' five weeks of adoption leave with full pay are augmented by three months of leave to cover all travel in connection with the adoption. Answering a parliamentary question, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi added that adoptive parents could avail themselves of a year's unpaid leave as parental leave and up to five years of unpaid leave as a career break.

- **4 February 2009** The Finance Minister formally launched a €10m grant scheme for businesses which invest in energy saving. He said during a visit to E&M Meats – which has invested in clean energy – that the scheme is open to all enterprises, including retailers and the tourism industry. It is co-financed by the European Regional and Development Fund.
- **4 February 2009** Unemployment in December reached 6,373 persons, 227 fewer than the previous month but up 201 when compared December 2007, according to National Statistics Office statistics.
- **5 February 2009** Outgoing US Ambassador Molly Bordonaro was made a Member of the National Order of Merit in recognition of her distinguished service for the promotion of US-Malta relations. She was conferred with the decoration by President Edward Fenech Adami.
- **6 February 2009** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport in January decreased by 11.8 percent when compared to the same month last year.
- **6 February 2009** The visible trade gap in December stood at €92.9 million, up by €35.8 million over the comparative month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **6 February 2009** In 2007 the police received 42 reports of sexual abuses on children, and procedures were started on 38 of them. Three other cases were still being investigated, and one case was given up. Four cases were decided, and the defendant in another case died. Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said this in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 February 2009** In 2008, government collected €553,956,549 in value-added tax, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 February 2009** From studies made over a period of 10 years it was estimated that the amount of rainwater percolating into the aquifers was about 23 million cubic metres every year. Answering a parliamentary question, Resources Minister George Pullicino said that the amount of water pumped up from the aquifers between 2003 and 2007 had amounted to between 13.1 million cubic metres in 2006 and 15.2 million cubic metres in 2003.
- **7 February 2009** In 2008 there were 40 consultants, out of 161 with the Health Department, who signed a contract to work exclusively for the public sector, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
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- **9 February 2009** The volume and the wholesale value of fresh fruit and vegetables increased by 5.3 percent in the last three months of last year when compared to the corresponding period of 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **9 February 2009** Passenger movements at the airport last month fell by 11.8 percent when compared to the same period last year. Official figures show the airport handled just over 138,000 passengers in January, a drop of 18,430.

Aircraft traffic also fell by 10.4 percent to just under 1,700 aircraft, resulting in a drop of seat capacity by 9.5 percent.

- **9 February 2009** The President, accompanied by Mrs Fenech Adami, paid an official visit to Mgarr.
- **10 February 2009** All eight guns of the Saluting Battery at the Upper Barrakka Gardens were fired this afternoon in a general salute to mark the feast of St Paul's Shipwreck. The re-enactment, presented by *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*, was watched by hundreds of people who crowded the barrakka. At the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Archbishop Paul Cremona led a Pontifical Mass. President Eddie Fenech Adami led the congregation.
- **10 February 2009** Over the past five years the Public Service Commission decided 165 criminal cases, after the public officials involved were found guilty by the courts, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **11 February 2009** Social Policy Minister John Dalli said that between 2004 and 2008 there had been a total of 104 cases of tuberculosis diagnosed in illegal immigrants. Most cases (74) were of pulmonary tuberculosis, with the other 30 being extra-pulmonary.
- **12 February 2009** There are 10 pending applications before MEPA for the building or extension of fireworks factories, the Prime Minister said in Parliament.
- **13 February 2009** Bilateral cooperation in areas such as energy, trade and tourism were discussed when Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci called on Foreign minister Tonio Borg in Valletta. The two ministers also discussed the situation in the Middle East and the Malta Initiative for a more structured dialogue between the European Union and the League of Arab States.
- **13 February 2009** A total of 21,121 Maltese travelled in December, an increase of 8.3 percent over the comparative month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **13 February 2009** The number of unemployed dropped by 533 in September when compared to the same period in 2007, according to the latest official statistics.
- **15 February 2009** The value of electronic exports shrunk by €200 million in 2008 but still managed to top the €1 billion mark.
- **16 February 2009** There was a strong uptake of applications for a new government refund scheme on energy saving equipment, with 118 applications within a few hours for refunds on photovoltaic panels and another 133 on solar water heaters. Resources Minister George Pullicino, present at the opening of the scheme, said there also were eight applications for refunds on roof insulation.
- **17 February 2009** The Infrastructure Ministry launched a multi-facet project to rehabilitate Fort St Elmo and open it for public events and cruise line activities. Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said the upper part of Fort St Elmo, which is at street level, is to be adapted and opened for public manifestations of a cultural and artistic nature.

- **17 February 2009** The total of children attending independent primary schools in Malta and Gozo is 3,166, Education Minister Dolores Cristina in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **18 February 2009** House prices in the third and fourth quarters of last year maintained a downward trend evident throughout 2008, the Central Bank says in its Quarterly Review, just published. It said the bank's property price indicator showed an annual decline of 3.2 percent in advertised prices, following contractions of 0.7 percent and 2.7 percent in the previous two quarters.
- **18 February 2009** President Eddward Fenech Adami left Malta for his last official visit to Australia on an invitation of Governor-General Quentin Bryce who was in Malta in November. The President is accompanied by Mrs Fenech Adami and Foreign Minister Tonio Borg.
- **20 February 2009** A memorandum of understanding was signed with *The UK Foundation Programme Office* to introduce its programme for house physicians as from July. Health Parliamentary Secretary Joe Cassar told a news conference that Malta was committed to ensuring that its junior doctors had the generalist medical knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the modern Maltese healthcare system.
- **20 February 2009** The Retail Price Index went down by 2.25 percent last month when compared to December. The National Statistics Office said this primarily reflected a decrease of 19.46 percent in the Clothing and Footwear Index, mainly due to seasonal price reductions. The Transport and Communication Index dropped by 4.17 percent, mainly brought about by lower fuel prices.
- **20 February 2009** The Employment and Training Corporation launched two EU-funded programmes aimed at investing in the motivation of job-seekers and others in employment wanting to improve skills. The programme was launched by Social Policy Minister John Dalli and will be in operation till 2013.
- **21 February 2009** The Vice President of China, Xi Jinping, was in Malta for an official visit. He attended talks with Acting President George Hyzler at the Palace in Valletta and with the Prime Minister at Auberge de Castille where several agreements were signed. Vice President Xi Jinping also met the Speaker of the House of Representatives at the Palace.
- **21 February 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami addressed the Maltese community in Victoria, Melbourne, recalling his first visit to Australia 32 years ago.
- **22 February 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami unveiled a bronze bust dedicated to the Maltese St Gorg Preca in Melbourne during his state visit to Australia.
- **23 February 2009** Foreign Minister Tonio Borg attended talks in Canberra with Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. The Foreign Ministry said they discussed bilateral relations, trade, as well as Australia's relations with the European Union and immigration.
- **23 February 2009** The number of cruise passengers visiting Malta last month rose to 12,580 from just 2,193 in January last year, figures issued today by the National Statistics Office show. There were 1,398 visitors in January 2007. A

total of five ships came to Malta in January compared to one in January 2008 and January 2007.

- **24 February 2009** The overall occupancy rate in hotels and other tourism establishments stood at 30.5 percent in December, down by 4.8 percentage points when compared to the same month in 2007, the National Statistics Office said.
- **25 February 2009** Inflation and the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices both dropped last month, according to figures issued this morning by the National Statistics Office.
- **25 February 2009** Over the past seven years, there were 397 illegal immigrants who escaped from the facilities where they were being held. The information was given by Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **26 February 2009** Some 51,643 tourists came to Malta in January, 19.1 percent less than in the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that the number was also similar to the number of arrivals in January 2007.
- **27 February 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami's official visit to Australia came to an end in Brisbane, Queensland with a call on governor Penelope Wensley.
- **28 February 2009** Malta posted the highest drop in inflation among eurozone members last month but still has the highest rate in the club, figures for January published show. Eurostat said the inflation rate in Malta stood at 3.1 percent in January, 2.2 percentage points lower than the previous month. The only other eurozone member state which saw a similar drop was Cyprus, where, at just 0.9 percent, the inflation rate was much lower than Malta's.

MARCH

- **1 March 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi attended an EU summit meeting during which European leaders were expected to commit to doing all they could to spur economic growth within EU single market rules.
- **1 March 2009** Half of the HIV cases being treated in Malta involve African immigrants, who make up just one percent of the population. Malta's only virologist in service and chairman of Mater Dei Hospital's Pathology Department, expressed concern about a problem which he insists cannot be ignored. There are currently 100 people being treated for HIV within the Malta health services, and half of these are immigrants.
- **1 March 2009** There was a sharp drop from the 48 percent occupancy rate in February 2007 and 2008. Figures compiled by the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association show that five-star hotels projected a drop of almost 22 percent in their occupancy levels for the past month, compared to the same period last year. This is in line with the 19.1 percent drop in inbound tourists for January announced by the National Statistics Office.

- **2 March 2009** Resources Minister George Pullicino visited the hunting reserve near Mellieha to see conservation work that is regularly and voluntarily carried out by the members of the Federation for Hunting & Conservation.
- **2 March 2009** Some 16 percent of water production was used but not billed last year because of faulty metering, according to Water Services Corporation estimates. Another 18 percent were lost in leakages. The figures were disclosed by the Auditor-General in a report to Parliament in which he urged the Water Services Corporation to intensify its efforts to reduce the level of water losses to one which is closer to what is considered as unavoidable.
- **3 March 2009** The total number of minutes on fixed local telephone lines dropped by almost a quarter last year from 2007, figures issued by the National Statistics Office show. The totals were 194,600,137 minutes in 2007 and 147,154,086 last year.
- **3 March 2009** The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) and the Malta Resources Authority (MRA) were allocated €250,000 by the EU to implement a project for long-term sustainable management of all water resources, including groundwater, coastal water and inland surface water. Both entities teamed up with the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning and with the experts from the International Office of Water to deliver this project.
- **4 March 2009** Registered unemployment in January increased by 525 when compared to the corresponding month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said in a statement that the registered unemployed in January in Malta amounted to 6,220, whereas in Gozo they numbered 768.
- **5 March 2009** A cooperation agreement against organised criminality was signed between Malta and Ireland. Through the agreement, signed by Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici and the Irish Justice Minister Dermot Ahern, the two governments will be able to cooperate in the development of training programmes aimed at leading experts to share information linked to prevention and investigation.
- **6 March 2009** Speaking at a press conference to mark the anniversary of the March 8 general election, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said the government remained focused on making Malta a centre of excellence in health, education, manufacturing, tourism, financial services, IT and Gozo as an ecological island by the year 2015.
- **6 March 2009** Mepa is currently evaluating 10 applications for the demolition of erstwhile hotels or tourist complexes to make space for residential or commercial premises, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while replying to a question in Parliament.
- **6 March 2009** Between May 2008 and January 15, 2009, there were 1,498 foreign in-patient and day-case admissions to Mater Dei Hospital, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in Parliament.
- **6 March 2009** Up to February 17, the number of sites identified by Mepa enforcement officers for the removal of derelict vehicles and other large metallic scrap was 294. The exercise was being carried out with the collaboration of local councils, and the material was being deposited in registered sites for eventual export. Answering a parliamentary question, the

Prime Minister added that throughout 2008 the police in Gozo had issued 44 orders for the removal of derelict vehicles.

- **6 March 2009** The payment of the last 20 percent of the capital and the interest on the whole deposits in the former Bank of Industry, Commerce and Agriculture Ltd (Bical) was being held up by judicial procedures. Answering a parliamentary question, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said the controller was doing everything in his power to see the liquidation process is finalised as soon as possible.
- **6 March 2009** There are 5,372 people in Malta and 974 in Gozo who receive an invalidity pension, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **6 March 2009** Of the 286 Gozitan students who graduated at the end of academic year 2007-08, 23 found employment in Malta and two in Gozo. Answering a parliamentary Social Policy Minister John Dalli added that some other graduates had found employment before graduating.
- **6 March 2009** The total amount paid to legal aid lawyers in 2008 was €34,265.44, Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said while answering a parliamentary question.
- **6 March 2009** Revenue from researches by the Public Registry Department in 2008 was €98,467.07, Communications Minister Austin Gatt said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **7 March 2009** Trelleborg will be investing €2 million to bring new production lines to Malta as a result of an agreement reached between the government and the company. Addressing a news conference, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said that through the agreement, the company would also have the capacity to employ another 85 people by the end of 2010.
- **8 March 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami concluded his official visits to towns and villages with a stop in his hometown, Birkirkara. He said that his visits to localities helped him discover particular characteristics. This also counted for Birkirkara, which had a long time history.
- **8 March 2009** The country will be successful this year if it remains focused on its priorities, namely employment, investment and economic activity, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said while speaking during a dialogue meeting at Naxxar.
- **9 March 2009** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport dropped by 10.5 percent in February, the Malta International Airport said.
- **10 March 2009** Cattle stock in Malta declined by 8.6 percent last year when compared to 2007. The National Statistics Office said that cattle under one year was affected by a 16.7 percent drop, while one to two year old stocks decreased by 7.3 percent.
- **10 March 2009** Unemployment fell by 308 and employment rose by 2,578 - 2,100 women and 478 men - between October 2007 and 2008.
- **10 March 2009** Passengers passing through the airport dropped by 10.5 percent last month when compared to same period last year. The total

passenger movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights in February amounted to 139,747, a decline of 16,458, the Malta International Airport said in a statement.

- **11 March 2009** Speaking in Parliament, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said that the Enemalta's revenue from tariffs last year did not even come close to covering the oil purchase costs - let alone the total cost of electricity. Revenue from tariffs, including the old surcharge and the new tariffs system, was €292 million while oil costs were €333 million.
- **11 March 2009** Malta's Gross Domestic Product in real terms grew by 1.6 percent last year from 3.6 percent in the previous year, to reach €5.7 billion. Figures issued by the National Statistics Office show that real GDP grew in the first three quarters of 2008, by 2.4 percent; 3.2 percent and 2.0 percent but slipped by -1.2 percent in the fourth quarter.
- **11 March 2009** Over 90 consuls of Malta residing in 49 countries visited SmartCity Malta and were briefed about the plans and potential of the project. The consuls were in Malta for a Consular Representation Conference being held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **12 March 2009** Imports and exports dropped in January when the visible trade gap stood at €122.1 million, up by €20.3 million when compared to the corresponding month last year. Provisional data for January provided by the National Statistics Office said there was a decrease in imports of €47.1 million and a decrease in exports of €67.4 million.
- **13 March 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi officially inaugurated the boys' secondary school at Santa Margherita College in Cospicua.
- **13 March 2009** A total of 19,754 Maltese went abroad in January, an increase of 1,356 over January last year, according to National Statistics Office figures issued.
- **13 March 2009** Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said that the government collected €40,790,206 from VAT in January this year.
- **13 March 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami and Mrs Fenech Adami payed an official visit to the Vatican city and the Republic of Italy.
- **14 March 2009** President Edward Fenech Adami had an audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican.
- **14 March 2009** The government said there was a strong and positive response to its latest stock issue. A total of 3,567 applications were received with a value of more than €242 million, dwarfing the value of €25 million of the two stock offers. All subscriptions by individuals, which amounted to €55,347,400, were accepted whereas offers by institutional investors were allotted in the order of bid price offered.
- **14 March 2009** The average cost of treatment of diabetic patients varies between €22.67 and €43.71 per month, depending on the prescribed therapy, Social Policy Minister John Dalli told Parliament.

- **14 March 2009** Last year, 25,945 people received sickness benefits. Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in Parliament that of these, 6,564 received such benefits more than once during the 12-month period.
- **14 March 2009** Between 2004 and 2008 there were 19 persons who overstepped the expense accounts allotted to them as part of their contracts of employment. Answering a parliamentary question Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said the total amounts involved were €8,554.68 in 2004, €3,007.30 in 2005, €3,380.76 in 2006 and €88.75 in 2007. No expense account had been overstepped in 2008.
- **16 March 2009** The Harmonised Index of Consumer prices went up by 0.8 percent last month from January, the National Statistics Office said.
- **17 March 2009** The producer price index for agricultural products increased by one per cent, from 115.5 points in the fourth quarter of 2007 to 116.7 points in the corresponding quarter of 2008, the National Statistics Office said.
- **17 March 2009** Farmers and herdsmen are this year being given €29m in aid as part of the 2007-2013 budget, Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said. Speaking at the Corinthia Hotel, Attard, during the launch of this year's funding programme, Mr Pullicino said such aid should continue to help the sector become more sustainable.
- **17 March 2009** The total amounts of unpaid water and electricity bills outstanding for more than six months currently stand at €5,922,970 for residential and €1,384,219 for non-residential water consumption and €14,508,974 residential and €3,519,465 non-residential electricity consumption, Minister Austin Gatt said while replying to a parliamentary question.
- **17 March 2009** The number of single parents registered as such up to March 4, 2009, was 2,443, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **18 March 2009** A sample survey among manufacturing enterprises carried out by the National Statistics Office in the fourth quarter of last year showed a 13 percent slide in sales.
- **18 March 2009** Out of 1,848 patients admitted to Mater Dei Hospital last January for medical or cardiac care, 68 were readmitted within seven days, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **19 March 2009** A total of 2,105 fines were issued last year against people who littered public places, figures given in Parliament show.
- **19 March 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi went to Brussels for two days to attend a European Council meeting. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech and Malta's permanent representative in the EU Richard Cachia Caruana.
- **19 March 2009** Local councils last year had total revenue of €5.79 million from fines imposed for traffic contraventions, figures given in Parliament show.
- **19 March 2009** Factories saw a 13 percent drop in sales in the last quarter of 2008, according to the latest official statistics. The National Statistics Office

said factory sales sampled in a survey stood at €513.5 million, a drop of 12.8 percent when compared to the same period in 2007.

- **19 March 2009** Up to the end of January 2009 there were 78,799 vehicles with personalised plates, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said while answering a Parliamentary question.
- **19 March 2009** There were cumulative numbers of 15,511 self-employed persons in Malta and 1,542 in Gozo who fell behind in national insurance contributions between 1999 and 2007, Economy Minister Tonio Fenech said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **19 March 2009** There were 13,410 new companies set up and registered with the Malta Financial Services Authority over the five years from 2004 to 2008. Over the same period, 3,568 companies were dissolved. The information was given by Economy Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **19 March 2009** There are currently 59 prisoners who are not being held at the Corradino Correctional Facility but in other institutions, Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 March 2009** Malta and Libya signed a memorandum of understanding on search and rescue. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "The memorandum of understanding is inspired by the desire of Malta and Libya to further promote the friendly relations between them and the necessity of improving the safety of life at sea in the Mediterranean basin conscious of the great importance of rendering assistance to persons in distress at and over the sea and also the establishment of adequate and effective arrangements for search and rescue services".
- **20 March 2009** Water production from groundwater reserves has dropped by 3.5 percent each year for the past eight years, the National Statistics Office said.
- **20 March 2009** Traffic offences netted a total of €5,790,228.15 throughout 2008. Although all the money was paid in 2008, some of the offences had been committed before. The information was given by the Prime Minister in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 March 2009** During 2008 a total of 2,529 tickets were issued for littering. They cost the offenders the grand sum of €40,716.03. The information was given by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **23 March 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi presented to Parliament an updated table of the funds allocated to Malta for 2007-2013 by the European Union. He said that Malta will receive €855 million under Cohesion Policy; €84 million under Rural Development and Fisheries; €125.9 million under Justice and Home Affairs; €25 million under European Economic Recovery Plan; €5.3 million under Other Funds allocated in connection to EU accession; and €63.7 million under Other EU Payments (direct payment to farmers and the Education Lifelong Learning and Youth programmes). Total: €1,158.9 million.
- **23 March 2009** The government launched a €500,000 aid scheme to encourage the opening of more childcare centres and improve standards. The scheme was announced by Social Policy Minister John Dalli.

- **24 March 2009** Occupancy in hotels and other places of collective accommodation dropped by 3.4 percent in January when compared to January 2008, to reach 31.5 percent, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 March 2009** Cruise passenger traffic saw a terrific rise in February from just under 2,500 passengers in the same month last year to about 14,200, according to official statistics. The jump, continuing the trend also seen in January, was reflected in the number of cruise liners which berthed - 12, as opposed to just two the previous February. More than 26,000 cruise liner passengers have set foot in Malta so far this year.
- **25 March 2009** The Retail Price Index jumped by almost a full point in February to 117.59 from 116.44 in January, figures issued by the National Statistics Office show.
- **25 March 2009** At the end of last January there were 448 persons who had been registering for work for more than five years, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **26 March 2009** There are currently 45 libel lawsuits that have been pending before the courts for more than five years: 40 at the Civil Courts in Malta; four at the Criminal Jurisdiction Court, also in Malta; and one at the Magistrates Court in Gozo. The information was given by Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 March 2009** EU commissioner Gunther Verheugen was in Malta for a one day visit.
- **27 March 2009** The shortfall in government revenue for January and February amounted to €199.5 million, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 March 2009** Tourist arrivals slumped by 10.6 percent last month when compared to the same month in 2008, the National Statistics Office said.
- **30 March 2009** There were 849 applications for government aid in the installation of water heaters and 221 for photovoltaic cells, Resources Minister George Pullicino said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **30 March 2009** Between August 2008 and January the government paid out €56.2 million for voluntary resignations from Malta Shipyards under schemes B, C and D, as well as €57.5 million for early retirement. The sum of €110,000 is still owed. The information was given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **30 March 2009** Child protection services received just under 500 calls reporting mistreatment of children in 2008, ranging from neglect to sexual and physical abuse, official statistics show.
- **31 March 2009** The overall expenditure on health accounted for 6.9 percent of the GDP in 2006, 6.5 percent in 2007 and seven per cent in 2008, Social Policy Minister John Dalli said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **31 March 2009** A total of 310 palm trees had to be uprooted because of the red weevil, Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said in reply to a parliamentary question.

- **31 March 2009** The President of Malta, H.E. Dr. Edward Fenech Adami and the Prime Minister, the Hon Lawrence Gonzi, attended a wreath laying ceremony on the occasion of Freedom Day.
- **31 March 2009** The concert *Music from Malta* marked the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Freedom Day in Gozo. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, the Hon. Frederick Azzopardi MP, together with Gozitan Mayors and other guests attended this concert.
- **31 March 2009** Senglea and Marsa tied during the annual Freedom Day regatta at the Grand Harbour, which led to jubilant scenes on both sides.

APRIL

- **1 April 2009** The House of Representatives approved the motion for Dr George Abela to become the eighth President of Malta.
- **1 April 2009** Parliament approved Dr George Abela as the eighth President of Malta, shortly after the House thanked The Hon Dr Edward Fenech Adami for the dignified manner in which he carried out his duties as President.
- **1 April 2009** The mean temperature last month was 13.4°C, less than half a degree lower than the norm for March in the last 30 years, the Meteorological Office said.
- **2 April 2009** Unemployment in February rose by 759 when compared to the same month of last year and by 130 from January, the National Statistics Office said.
- **2 April 2009** Dr Cherie Blair top lawyer, mother of four and wife of former British Prime Minister Dr Tony Blair, at the start of a keynote speech on Balancing Family And Career, on the invitation of the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Catherine Gonzi, stressed the importance of there being a balance between work and life.
- **3 April 2009** The Treasury received 548 applications having a total value exceeding €70 million against the authorised sum on issue of €60 million (subject to an over-allotment option for an additional amount of Euro 20 million) by the closing time of the latest government stock issue.
- **4 April 2009** The Hon Edward Fenech Adami arrived at the end of his five year term as President of Malta.
- **4 April 2009** Dr George Abela was sworn in as the eighth President of Malta and said he hoped that the unity shown in his appointment would be like a seed which grows to become a tree with many branches. Dr Abela was sworn in at a special sitting of Parliament which was preceded by Pontifical Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **5 April 2009** A new chapter in relations between America and the European Union seems to have been opened following a two-hour meeting between US President Barack Obama and the 27 heads of the European block, The Prime

Minister, the Hon Lawrence Gonzi, said while speaking at the airport on his arrival in Malta following the summit, held in Prague.

- **5 April 2009** As he unveiled the new Lufthansa Technik plant in Luqa, The Hon Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi said that one of Malta's greatest assets was its flexible, highly-skilled and dedicated workforce, which had continued to attract growth in the sector of high value-added manufacturing.
- **6 April 2009** Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 9.2 percent during 2008, driven mainly by outlays on pensions and children's allowance, the National Statistics Office said.
- **7 April 2009** Various ethical issues in the social areas were discussed in a meeting between The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy and Mgr Pietro Parolin, Under Secretary of the Holy See for Relations with States. The minister was accompanied by Mgr Mario Laurenti, Malta's Representative to the Holy See.
- **8 April 2009** Accumulated pension liabilities at the end of 2007 amounted to €14.3 billion or 264.2 percent of the gross domestic product, the National Statistics Office said.
- **8 April 2009** There were 19,255 trademarks and 2,658 patents registered in Malta between 1999 and 2008, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in Parliament in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **9 April 2009** Wage inflation accelerated to 4.7 percent last year from 4.1 percent the year before but it was below price inflation, according to the Central Bank's annual report.
- **9 April 2009** The decision to raise the retirement age by five years to 65, cut the amount the government owes in pensions, by seven per cent, leading to savings of €1.6 billion based on figures prevailing in 2006, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **11 April 2009** Exports declined by a staggering €127.9 million in the first two months of this year when compared to the same months last year, while imports were down by €121.2 million, according to figures issued by the National Statistics Office.
- **14 April 2009** Malta International Airport (MIA) reported an 18.8 percent decline in passenger movements in March when compared to the same month last year. The company said passenger movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights in March 2009 reached 183,984 a decline of 42,556 when compared to March 2008.
- **14 April 2009** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs had a meeting in Damascus with Syrian President Bashar al Assad. The talks were held at the beginning of a Middle East tour which will see Dr Borg also visit Lebanon and Jordan. Bilateral relations and regional peace and cooperation are on the agenda.
- **14 April 2009** The number of people crossing between Malta and Gozo declined sharply in the first quarter of this year when compared to the same

three months last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said the number of passengers was down by 11.1 percent to 711,265 when compared to the same period in 2008. The number of vehicles carried by scheduled vessels went down by 5.3 percent, to 220,018.

- **15 April 2009** Maltese departing by air and sea in February were estimated at 16,840, most in the 25-44 age bracket, the National Statistics Office said. It said that 14,446 visited an EU destination, the most popular being Italy and the UK, while 2,394 ventured outside the EU. In the first two months of this year, the number of Maltese passengers departing by air and sea amounted to 36,595, an increase of 3.3 percent over the corresponding period last year.
- **15 April 2009** The Prime Minister, the Hon Lawrence Gonzi, and the Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, presented the Local Council Reform document.
- **16 April 2009** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up by 1.5 percent last month when compared to the previous month, the NSO said. The National Statistics Office said this primarily reflected an increase of 5.6 percent in the clothing and footwear index, mainly due to seasonal price rises in garments. The restaurants and hotels index rose by 5.1 percent.
- **17 April 2009** The government's shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure last year amounted to €233.1 million, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said that the shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure increased by €124 million over the previous year.
- **17 April 2009** Malta and Jordan signed a double taxation avoidance agreement, the first between the two countries. During a visit to this country, The Hon.Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs held talks with his counterpart Naser Jodeh and Finance Minister Bassem Salem.
- **18 April 2009** During a press conference covering the ministry's work over the past year, The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs confirmed that inmates are among a number of people who will be arraigned on the strength of an inquiry that found gross "maladministration and mismanagement" in the running of the prison. Electronic tagging of criminals and a serious offenders' register will be in place by the end of the year when a law regulating these matters should be finalised.
- **18 April 2009** Inflation in Malta reached 3.9 percent, up from 3.5 percent in February.
- **19 April 2009** Almost 70,000 speeding offences have been snapped by eight speed cameras, collecting over €5.1 million in fines in the past three years alone, according to figures provided by the Malta Transport Authority (ADT).
- **20 April 2009** The Black Eyed Peas, Lady Gaga, Metro Station and Esmée Denters will be performing at the Isle of MTV music event in Malta on July 8. The Hon. Mario de Marco, the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, said that Malta was proud, that for the third time running, the islands would host this musical event.
- **20 April 2009** The Malta Parkinson's Disease Association launched The Parkinson's Awareness Week and announced Mrs Kate Gonzi as one of its patrons.

- **20 April 2009** A revised Electoral Register for general and local elections as well as the European Union Electoral Register was published. A list of all persons registered as voters would be made available at police stations, at the Local Council Offices and at the Electoral Office
- **20 April 2009** Malta will be getting €800,000 added to its coffers after a surplus was registered in last year's EU budget.
- **20 April 2009** The European Commission closed eight infringement cases against Malta after being satisfied that the island has now conformed to EU rules in these cases. Most of the infringements closed were related to the environment.
- **20 April 2009** The Mdina Local Council in collaboration with Malta Tourism Authority and other entities organised The Mediaeval Mdina festival. Mdina became alive with a series of animated events, including sword fights, jousting tournaments and archery displays.
- **21 April 2009** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment and The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism launched a scheme subsidising interest on loans for the refurbishment and extension of hotels and restaurants. The €3 million scheme will be spread over a 10-year-period.
- **21 April 2009** UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon started a two-day official visit to Malta with talks at the Office of the Prime Minister.
- **21 April 2009** The number of licences for new motor vehicles jumped in the first quarter of this year. Figures issued by the NSO showed that there were 4,264 new registrations between January and March, when compared to 3,276 in the first three months of last year.
- **21 April 2009** The Hon John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy opened a seminar dealing with sexual abuse on female drug addicts. He found that 53 percent of the sexually abused drug addicts were abused in childhood, 37 percent in adolescence and 10 percent in adulthood.
- **21 April 2009** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said in parliament that the number of births where the father was marked at 'unknown' rose to 359 last year from 62 in 1993. Figures showed that there were 5,602 births in 1993 when compared to 4,258 of last year.
- **21 April 2009** The Prime Minister, The Hon Lawrence Gonzi said in Parliament that a fresh application for EU funds for the building of a passenger terminal at Cirkewwa ferry harbour would be submitted to the EU in the coming weeks.
- **22 April 2009** The House of Representatives started debating changes to the Electoral Law so that people who declare that they will be abroad during polling day at general, local or European Parliament elections, may vote on the Saturday before. The Bill was moved by The Hon.Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- **22 April 2009** NSO figures showed that the government deficit at the end of the fourth quarter of last year had climbed to €45.4 million when compared to just €7.5 million in the fourth quarter of 2007.

- **22 April 2009** The economic and financial crisis left a much bigger impact than expected on Malta and this led to a drop in business resulting in more limited income for the government, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment.
- **22 April 2009** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs was called to an urgent meeting in Brussels with Mr Maroni, Italian Minister after the ongoing dispute over migration yesterday escalated when Italy published a dossier about Malta's search and rescue record.
- **22 April 2009** The Hon President George Abela turned 61 and it is the first birthday he will be celebrating in the role of head of state.
- **22 April 2009** The government launched a policy document for local governance, almost a week after the official reform document was released and 15 years after local councils were set up, during a business breakfast chaired by the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. The reform will, among other things, bring about an extension to the local councils' term from three to four years, which, after 2010, means elections will be held every other year.
- **22 April 2009** MCESD's Gozo Committee had been formally set up on September 18, 2008, with members from various sectors of Gozitan civic society and it had met 13 times in the seven months of its existence, said The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **22 April 2009** The outstanding payments which Mepa owed contractors for the period between November 2008 and the end of January 2009 amount to €718,902.85, Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister said in a reply to a parliamentary question. Mepa also owed €162,671.35 in refunds on permit applications between November 2008 and the end of February 2009.
- **22 April 2009** Over the ten years between 1999 and 2008, a total of 102 film productions were shot in Malta, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question. The busiest year was 2000, with 18 productions.
- **23 April 2009** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment inaugurated the 16th edition of the Air Malta International Travel Exhibition (AMITEX) with 30 exhibitors vying for travellers in difficult economic times at the Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre at Ta' Qali.
- **23 April 2009** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs reviewed the work done by his ministry in the past year. Amongst others, he mentioned that Turkey will open an embassy in Malta in the near future in a bid to strengthen bilateral relations and an EU-Arab League liaison office will be set up in Malta in the coming months, at the former MCESD office in Floriana.
- **23 April 2009** Cruise passenger traffic last month amounted to 5,053 people, a decrease of 1,113 passengers over the corresponding month in 2008, the National Statistics Office said.
- **23 April 2009** Cabinet will be discussing a reform document on the Malta Environment and Planning Authority during its next meeting, said The Hon.

Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister whilst addressing a news conference on the ministry's achievements in the past year.

- **24 April 2009** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs told journalists on his arrival in Malta from Brussels where he had a meeting with his Italian counterpart Roberto Maroni, that Malta and Italy were pushing the EU for action on three issues. They called on the EU to draw up a real and strong programme with Libya, from where the illegal migration problem originated, to expand Frontex, which coordinates operational cooperation between member states in the field of border security, and to draw up of a relocation policy at EU level.
- **24 April 2009** The shortfall between the government's recurrent revenue and total expenditure increased by €54.9 million between January and March when compared to the corresponding period last year. It amounted to €265 million, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 April 2009** The government gave to the Munxar Council, land close to the main square, to turn into a playing field and a relaxation zone, while the Gharb Council was given a state building to turn into a civic centre. The land was given at a much lower than commercial rental rate. Present for the devolution ceremony were The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land and the Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.
- **25 April 2009** The government financial position deteriorated by a further €55 million in the first three months of the year. Figures published by the National Statistics Office showed that the deficit in the first quarter stood at €265 million, 26 per cent higher than that recorded in the same period last year.
- **26 April 2009** The Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs and the Mgarr Council organised Festa Frawli, the annual festival which celebrates all things strawberry, at Mgarr Square.
- **27 April 2009** The authorities called on people in Malta who travelled to Mexico in the past three weeks to contact the Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention if they need professional advice on the swine flu, the Director General for Public Health Regulation, Ray Busuttill said in a press conference. The authorities can be contacted on 21324086.
- **27 April 2009** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini held talks in Luxembourg on illegal immigration. The talks were held prior to the start of an EU foreign ministers' meeting which will be discussing migration.
- **27 April 2009** Dr Anton Micallef was appointed Chairman of Viset Malta, the operator of the Valletta Waterfront, succeeding Joseph Zammit Tabona. Mr Zammit Tabona relinquished his chairmanship ahead of his appointment as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.
- **27 April 2009** The Resources Ministry started work on the embellishment of the promenade at Marsaxlokk. The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said during a tour of the site that the work is being carried out in phases. The project will cost some €1.2 million.

- **27 April 2009** Unemployment in March jumped by 915 persons when compared to the same month last year to reach 7,083, NSO figures issued show.
- **28 April 2009** Detailed studies will be conducted on three sites Hal Far, Wied Rini (near Mtahleb/Bahrja on the site which currently has communications masts) and offshore at Sikka I-Bajda to assess their suitability for the setting up of wind farms, The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister said, during a press conference. The studies will include wind force, aviation and maritime activity and the environmental impact.
- **28 April 2009** The Malta Maritime Authority has made a series of proposals for the setting up of permanent and temporary yacht marinas to meet growing demand, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said
- **28 April 2009** Arrivals in hotels in February dropped by 14.1 percent when compared to the same month last year, while total nights spent decreased by 13 percent over the corresponding month in 2008, the NSO said.
- **28 April 2009** Government revenue from taxation on property sales dipped sharply in the first two months of this year, according to the figures given in Parliament by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment. The figures, given by Finance Minister Tonio Fenech, compare revenue from capital gains tax and stamp duty in the first two months of 2006, 2007, 2008 and this year along with the value of the properties.
- **28 April 2009** The National Pandemic Steering Committee and the pandemic committee within the Health Division met to review the situation over swine flu scarce. It urged doctors to be more vigilant when they come across flu-like symptoms as swine flu had started spreading globally amid concerns that it might develop into a full-blown influenza pandemic.
- **29 April 2009** Tourist arrivals in March declined by 21.4 percent in March when compared to the corresponding month last year (when March was Easter month). The figures were practically unchanged when compared to March 2007, according the National Statistics Office.
- **29 April 2009** Net revenue from VAT slumped in the first quarter of this year when compared to the same months last year, figures given by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in Parliament showed. Revenue between January and March was €94,341,594 when compared to €105,174,413 in the same three months of last year.
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- **29 April 2009** Travellers are being advised not to visit Mexico as a precaution against swine flu. The warning from the public health authorities came after the World Health Organisation stepped up the alert from Level III to Level IV, two levels away from a pandemic.
- **30 April 2009** The number of traffic accidents fell in Malta but grew in Gozo in the first quarter of the year, the NSO said. The number of reported traffic accidents reached 3,402, a drop of 237 cases or 6.5 percent over the corresponding quarter of 2008.

- **30 April 2009** President Emeritus Guido de Marco was among the guests of Queen Elizabeth at a reception in Buckingham Palace marking the 60th anniversary of the London declaration that had formally set up the Commonwealth.

MAY

- **1 May 2009** The eighth edition of the Malta International Fireworks Festival organised by the Secretariat for Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority started as part of events marking the fifth anniversary of Malta's EU membership
- **1 May 2009** More than 6,000 Maltese requested assistance from the country's embassies and consulates overseas in the first four months of 2009. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that there had been 7,400 requests for assistance over the whole of last year.
- **1 May 2009** April 2009 was colder than average, the Meteorological Office said. The average temperature this month was 15.3°C, with the warmest day being the 25th, when the Met Office's thermometer reached 21.9°C.
- **1 May 2009** The House of Representatives approved through all stages a Bill amending the electoral law so that eligible voters who declare that they will be abroad on polling day at general, local or European Parliament elections will vote on the Saturday before.
- **2 May 2009** The Palace in Valletta will be dedicated solely for the President and all other offices currently operating from the building will be moved elsewhere. The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister told in a news conference that the Palace will be restored to how it was originally and alternative sites were to start being sought for operations not related to the President, including the Attorney General's office, the Community Chest Fund and Parliament.
- **2 May 2009** The health authorities are handling a "substantial" number of phone calls by worried people asking about swine flu, said Public Health Regulation Director General Ray Busuttill.
- **3 May 2009** Thousands of scouts and guides took part in their annual parade at Valletta. The huge parade marched off from Floriana granaries and accorded the salute to the Hon President George Abela and the scout and guide commissioners on the Palace Square.
- **3 May 2009** Mr Justice Giovanni Bonello will be the superintendent of the Palace and will oversee the palace project, which will cover the restoration of the ground floor, converting it to an exhibition area of items that were part of Malta's heritage.
- **4 May 2009** A new redesigned government online customer care system was launched and it will be accessible through www.servizz.gov.mt. The service was launched by The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.

- **5 May 2009** A three-day mass immunisation, quarantines and the setting up of flu clinics form part of Malta's contingency plan if swine influenza will develop into a full-blown pandemic. This plan was drafted in 2005 when avian influenza was seen as the likely cause of a dreaded pandemic and it was later updated.
- **6 May 2009** The Malta Resources Authority approved new, reduced electricity tariffs as proposed by Enemalta, said The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. The new tariffs will be backdated to 1 April 2009.
- **6 May 2009** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs made a short visit to Libya and had a meeting with new Libyan Foreign Minister Moussa Koussa.. This was an informal courtesy call following Mr Koussa's recent appointment.
- **6 May 2009** The government's net VAT revenue in the first quarter of 2009 amounted to €94,341,594, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment when replying to a parliamentary question.
- **6 May 2009** EU Finance Ministers officially sealed the deal allowing Malta to keep foodstuffs and medicine free of VAT. The final legal text, which changes the derogation granted to Malta in its accession negotiations from temporary to permanent, was approved during a meeting of the Economic and Financial Council (Ecofin) in Brussels.
- **6 May 2009** The government occasionally will hire ambulances from private sources to replace out-of-service government ambulances. No ambulances had been hired in the first six months of 2008, whereas there had been 198 occasions in the second six months, said The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy, when replying to a parliamentary question.
- **7 May 2009** Consultation documents on a Building Regulations Act and on regulations on the avoidance of damage to third party properties were launched by The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. He said the law will provide for the creation of a Building Regulations Office under his ministry to ensure that buildings were built according to technical specifications.
- **7 May 2009** A campaign to promote tourism awareness among the Maltese people was launched by The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism. The campaign will be focused on video adverts by children in which they point out that everyone has a role in tourism. The campaign, in English and Maltese, will be aimed at both children and adults.
- **7 May 2009** A sum of €200,000 in connection with Vision Eco-Gozo were allocated for this year, said Minister Giovanna Debono in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **7 May 2009** Households around the island will be receiving an information leaflet about swine influenza in a bid to allay fears, as the world remains on the alert to minimise the impact of the virus. The leaflet will be part of a €3.5 million spending package that will also go towards antiviral supplies, antibiotics, protective gear for hospital workers and the stockpiling of alcohol-based hand rubs.

- **8 May 2009** A garden in the heart of Rabat - Gnien Bir Iljun, was passed on to the town's council by the central government. The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land said that the devolution was in line with the councils' reform which was designed to place the people as the centre of council's work.
- **8 May 2009** A childcare centre was inaugurated by The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport at MCAST Paola to offer education and care to children up till three years old. The Paola centre co-funded by the European Union will take 25 children, from newborn to three years and it will be open to sons and daughters of Mcast students and staff members as well as to children whose parents lived or worked in the area.
- **8 May 2009** Malta International Airport last month registered a 1.4 percent increase in passenger movements. The total passenger movements amounted to 255,013 an increase of 3,442 passengers when compared to April of last year.
- **9 May 2009** Valletta's Palace Square will feature an installation of multi-coloured water jets as part of an embellishment project which will be under way on June 8. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, said in press conference, that the square will be fully pedestrianised and paved.
- **9 May 2009** Europe Day was celebrated in Valletta with a debate in the parliament chamber and activities and an exhibition at Palace Square. The debate featured six girl guides and six MPs, including the speaker Louis Galea who touched a range of subjects. Activities outside the Palace included children's games and the cutting of a cake to mark Europe Day.
- **9 May 2009** Close to 300 children from more than 40 football nurseries took part in a European Parliament Football Festival at Floriana, as part of the Europe Day. President George Abela, paid a visit to the football enthusiasts.
- **9 May 2009** Mr Antonio Tajani Vice-President of The European Commission Responsible for Transport, was in Malta for a short visit. While in Malta, Mr Tajani gave a press conference with The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. He also met President George Abela, The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and Speaker of the House of Representatives Louis Galea. He also addressed the Mini European Assembly and participated in a conference on five years since Malta's EU membership.
- **9 May 2009** The trade gap narrowed by €14.5 million in March over the same month last year. Also both imports and exports fell by €58.8 million and €44.3 million respectively. The National Statistics Office said this was mainly because of a smaller demand for machinery and fuels, both locally and overseas.
- **9 May 2009** The European Parliament approved an additional €25 million in funds for Malta which will be used to link the island to the European electricity grid through Sicily. The money will be added to the €855 million already granted to the island through the current seven-year EU budget.
- **10 May 2009** Malta will be proposing the setting up of a checkpoint in Libya to monitor the flow of fleeing Africans, a move that is hoped will significantly reduce human trafficking while at the same time respecting human rights.

- 11 May 2009** A scheme whereby non-governmental organisations can acquire reconditioned computers at a low price was announced by The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. The 'PC4NGOs' scheme was announced at the Caritas San Blas centre, where 10 reconditioned Pentium IV computers were presented to the Director, Mgr Victor Grech, to be used by the residents following drug rehabilitation courses at the centre.
- 11 May 2009** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport increased by 1.4 percent in April, which was Easter month after having declined in the first three months of the year. MIA said passenger movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights in April 2009 were of 255,013, an increase of 3,442 passengers when compared to April 2008.
- 11 May 2009** A total of 895 irregular immigrants had been registered as gainfully occupied since 2003 and they pay income tax and social security contributions, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question. Two migrants are registered as being employers, said the Finance Minister.
- 11 May 2009** The AFM will be planning to acquire a new maritime patrol aircraft by the end of next year, said The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister in reply to a parliamentary question. The purchase will be jointly funded by the EU External Borders Fund and the Maltese government.
- 12 May 2009** The Employment and Training Corporation's new employability programme co-financed by the European Social Fund was launched by The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. The programme will be intended to strengthen job seekers' skills. The second extension to the ETC's new training centre co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund was also launched.
- 12 May 2009** Figures issued by the NSO showed that outbound Maltese tourists in March totalled 20,809, a decrease of 12.9 per cent over March 2008. The majority were in the 25-44 age brackets. The NSO said 18,117 visited an EU destination, the most popular being the UK and Italy, while 2,692 chose destinations outside the EU.
- 12 May 2009** There are 33 children of illegal immigrants attending state schools and the biggest number, ten, attend Pietà primary school, said The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in reply to a parliamentary question.
- 13 May 2009** Two world unique Flemish tapestries were returned to Malta following restoration in Belgium. The two tapestries, form part of a set of 29, all of which are being restored and had been given to St John's Co Cathedral by Grand Master Ramon Perellos in 1701. The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport told in a news conference that about one million euro was being dedicated to the restoration of the tapestries. This was apart from the assistance being given by the Belgian Defence Ministry which was financing their transport.

- **13 May 2009** A national strategy for social protection and inclusion aimed at eliminating abuse while targeting help at those in need was launched by The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy
- **13 May 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister said that no case of swine flu had been identified or even suspected in Malta in a reply to a supplementary parliamentary question.
- **14 May 2009** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, toured the site of the construction of the new building which will house the ICT Faculty at the University of Malta with University rector Juanito Camilleri.
- **14 May 2009** An energy saving device which will put computers to sleep when not in use was launched by Innovative Solutions. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, was also present for the launch.
- **14 May 2009** A quarter of births last year was to unwed mothers, an increase of 9% over the previous year, NSO statistics issued showed. The figures were issued to mark the International Day of Families.
- **15 May 2009** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said that in St Anne Square in Sliema a fountain will be set up, instead of a kiosk. He was accompanied by The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land, during a visit to the work site in Sliema. .
- **15 May 2009** A scheme for the restoration of wind-powered water pumps was launched by the Ministry of Gozo. This scheme will promote the practical and traditional application of renewable energy utilisation and it was also launched as another initiative within the eco-Gozo concept. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo told in a news conference that the scheme will be financed by her ministry and co-ordinated by the Department for Projects and Development within the same ministry.
- **16 May 2009** The government appointed Mr Charles Inguanez as Ambassador to Russia and Dr George Cassar as Ambassador to Libya. Mr Inguanez, an experienced diplomat, served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for over 22 years, whilst Dr Cassar acted as a legal adviser and company secretary and served on the board of directors of a number of companies.
- **17 May 2009** Malta assumed the presidency of the 5+5 defence western Mediterranean initiative, during the annual defence ministers' meeting of the initiative held in Tripoli. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs represented Malta on behalf of The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister.
- **18 May 2009** The unscheduled bus service, which include coaches and vans, will be liberalised when new regulations will be issued in a legal notice, announced The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. He said that the liberalisation of the mini-buses sector will see a six-year transition period. There will be no such transition period for coaches.
- **18 May 2009** The Public Health Regulation Division will be following developments in the use of electronic cigarettes, as well as the recommendation of health institutions, and local policies and laws will be

revised as and when necessary. The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said this in reply to a parliamentary question which asked about the review of government's policy with regard to electronic cigarette kits which worked with replacement nicotine cartridges.

- **18 May 2009** Aviation, informatics, engineering and pharmaceuticals are the four major areas which Malta Enterprise sees as the most promising for new investment in Malta, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **19 May 2009** The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism visited Wied Iz-Zurrieq embellishment works which is popular among divers and tourists taking boats to the Blue Grotto.
- **19 May 2009** Non fatal occupational accidents decreased by 15.0 percent in the first quarter of this year when compared to the same quarter of last year, said the National Statistics Office.
- **19 May 2009** The new identity cards will be issued by the National Identity Management Office (NIDM) which will also include the Passports Office. No fees will be paid for the new ID card, said The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, in a reply to a parliamentary question
- **20 May 2009** A substantial increase in the number of gainfully occupied people - 3,677, was registered in the last three months of last year, when compared with the same period in 2007, said the National Statistics Office, quoting from the Labour Force Survey.
- **20 May 2009** In the five years between 2004 and 2008 there were 2,464 foreigners who were accorded Maltese citizenship, said The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 May 2009** The percentage of Maltese exports that went to EU member states in the five years between 2004 and 2008 varied between 45 and 51 per cent, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **21 May 2009** The first four months of this year saw a 22.9 percent increase in cruise passengers over the same period last year but traffic in April declined by 17.4 percent when compared to the corresponding month a year ago, said the National Statistics Office.
- **22 May 2009** The number of swimming zones increased to 37 from last year's 26 and they had been delineated by a line of red and yellow market buoys. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said in a news conference that it will be prohibited to navigate any craft in such zones between June 15 and September 30.
- **22 May 2009** There were 3,954 public service employees, and of these, 2,219 were women, said The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **23 May 2009** The Maltese health authorities prepared an informative swine flu leaflet, which will be distributed in households. Health authorities will take all

the precautions should swine flu hit the island, even close schools, if it will start spreading in classrooms.

- **25 May 2009** The government approved additional spending of €6 million on the roads, raising to €16 million its outlay on the roads this year, apart from other funds from the EU, said The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. He said the works would concentrate on the resurfacing of sections of 24 arterial and nine link roads and the building of 33 new roads in residential areas.
- **25 May 2009** Hotel occupancy was down almost 11 percent in March when compared to March 2008, the NSO said. It said the overall occupancy rate in collective accommodation establishments went down by 10.9 percentage.
- **26 May 2009** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, had talks on illegal immigration with Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. The two ministers said in a joint statement that they had agreed to invite the Libyan Foreign Minister for talks in Rome next month.
- **26 May 2009** The first of 80 wi-fi spots in public places was inaugurated by The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications at the Old Railway Station Garden in Birkirkara. Another two wi-fi spots were simultaneously switched on at Independence Gardens in Sliema and the area around St Aloysius College in Birkirkara.
- **26 May 2009** The government will be stepping up security in its IT system through a new structure for privileged accounts used by multiple officials. A call for tenders for the provision of a password management system, which will store and manage privileged accounts, was issued.
- **26 May 2009** In the first quarter of 2009 there were nine reports of rape, 133 of domestic violence and two of grievous injury to senior citizens, said The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **27 May 2009** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, visited the works at Boiler Wharf, in Senglea and it will welcome its first cruise liner from July.
- **28 May 2009** A large wartime shelter under Tarxien village core was handed to the locality's local council, which will plan to turn it into an attraction. A contract of guardianship was signed by the Government Property Division and Tarxien Local Council.
- **28 May 2009** A branch of the Institute for Tourism Studies was inaugurated in Qala by The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister following a €1.8 million investment. The project, which involved the demolition of the previous structure, was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.
- **29 May 2009** Malta will be the first country with intelligent electricity meters installed in all its households and commercial outlets said The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications during the Second World Oil and Fuel Summit. He said that the intelligent metres, which had already started being installed, would gradually replace the old ones and Malta should be totally smart metered by 2012.

- **30 May 2009** Applications for participation in EU funded projects were multiplying each month, said The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister at a conference for youths organised by the EU Programmes Agency.
- **31 May 2009** Foreign Affairs Ministry officials have attended 720 meetings in European institutions since Malta's membership in the EU. The ministry said in a statement that its role had changed substantially since Malta joined the union.

June

- **1 June 2009** A grouping of 13 local councils in rural areas and representatives of the private sector, qualified for a €90,000 EU grant under the Leader Programme. The funds will be used by the Majjistral Action Group (MAG) towards the creation of a Local Development Strategy for the localities. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information praised the collaborative effort of the stakeholders in acquiring these funds which will benefit rural localities.
- **1 June 2009** May was 1.5 degrees celsius warmer than Malta's 30-year climatological mean, said the Meteorological Office. The warmest day of April 2009 was the 26th, when the thermometer recording 32.2°C, whilst the lowest temperature was 11.2°C.
- **1 June 2009** Icelandic Foreign Minister Ossur Skarphéonsson was in Malta and he had talks with Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Icelandic Foreign Minister Ossur Skarphéonsson explained that the objective of his visit was to learn from Malta's story within the European Union, given that both Malta and Iceland were islands.
- **1 June 2009** A Research and Development Incentives Package for industry was launched by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment. The package's purpose was to help enterprises create new products and remain competitive. The package is being administered by Malta Enterprise and will be open to all enterprises.
- **2 June 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister toured the factory Toly Products in Bulebel. He was accompanied by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment during the factory visit.
- **2 June 2009** A total of 3,632 women will be expected to save at least one year of income tax as a result of a measure announced in the last budget, said the Finance Ministry. The incentive will be applicable to women who return to work after having children.

- **2 June 2009** The absolute number of mobile telephone subscriptions reached 388,284 in the first quarter of this year, a penetration of 93.8 percent from 90.3 percent in the same period of last year, said the National Statistics Office.
- **2 June 2009** A total of 54 companies benefited from assistance under the Grant Scheme for Tourism Enterprises 2004-2006, said The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, during a tour of the Victoria Hotel. Victoria Hotel is one of the enterprises which benefited from the scheme.
- **2 June 2009** The Bill amending the Local Councils Act laid down the schedule of elections for the local councils. There will be no elections in 2010, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. In 2012, elections will be held in 22 local councils which were meant to hold their elections in 2010. In 2013, elections will be held for those councils which held their election in 2009 and 11 councils which were meant to hold their elections in 2011. Elections in 2015 and 2019 will be held for half of the local councils in the 2012 group. Similarly elections in 2017 and 2021 will be held for half of the 2013 group.
- **3 June 2009** The newly rehabilitated St Anne Square in Sliema was inaugurated after works carried out by the Resources Ministry. The square was inaugurated by The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs.
- **4 June 2009** Carbon monoxide emissions in Malta dropped between 2001 and 2004 but increased again in subsequent years, according to the National Statistics Office.
- **4 June 2009** Theatres last year made a profit of about €200,000 and attracted 209,003 patrons to 314 productions, 22 per cent more than in the previous year. The National Statistics Office said theatres had total revenue of €1.4 million and spent €1.2 million. Concerts were the most popular (24 per cent), followed by musicals (17 per cent) and comedy (13 per cent), according to the National Statistics Office.
- **5 June 2009** Malta commemorated the 7 June 1919 bread riots, during which four Maltese lost their lives, on 5th June 2009 because of the holding of the European and local elections on 6th June 2009. The event was celebrated with a wreath laying ceremony at the foot of the Sette Giugno monument by the Hon. Speaker Louis Galea, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Opposition leader Joseph Muscat. Seven former MPs, were awarded a medal issued in 1996 commemorating the 75th anniversary of the reintroduction of responsible government in Malta. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **5 June 2009** At €108.6 million, Malta's visible trade gap improved by €55.4 million in April when compared to the same month of last year, said the National Statistics Office.
- **5 June 2009** A total of 8,830 voting documents for local council elections remained uncollected. The local council elections will be held concurrently with the European Parliament elections in Mdina, Cospicua, Zabbar, Victoria, Birkirkara, Fgura, Gudja, Gharb, Ghaxaq, Kalkara, Lija, Marsascala, Mgarr, Msida, Naxxar, Pietà, Rabat, San Gwann, Sannat, Sliema, Tarxien, Xghajra and Mtarfa. There are 132,859 registered voters in those localities.

- **5 June 2009** A total of 15,862 voting documents for the European Parliament elections remained uncollected at the offices of the Electoral Commission; up from some 10,100 when the first EP elections were held in Malta in 2004. That means that of 322,411 registered voters, 306,549 will be eligible to vote.
- **6 June 2009** Polling stations across Malta and Gozo closed at 10 p.m. at the end of voting for the election of five Members of the European Parliament. Voting also took place in 23 localities to elect local councils. Turnout for the European Parliament elections reached 34 percent up to 2 p.m., said the Electoral Commission while turnout for the local council elections averaged 33 percent. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **7 June 2009** Turnout for European Parliament elections, after the closure of election, reached 78.81 percent, down from 82.4 percent for the same elections in 2004, according to figures issued by the Electoral Commission. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **8 June 2009** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, paid a surprise visit to Kirstin Abela Caruana at St Catherine's High School, Pembroke after she collected 7,200 batteries from relatives and friends that were going to be dumped in the landfill. He presented her with books on the environment. He did the same in the case of Samaryah Sammut, 12, from the same school, who collected about 2,000 batteries.
- **9 June 2009** Palace Square had been dug up and the Sette Giugno monument had been removed from its pedestal as work on a €1 million regeneration project started. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said, during a tour of the site that, the project will be earmarked for completion in mid-November.
- **9 June 2009** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs told Andreas Carlgren, Minister of The Environment of Sweden, during a meeting, that Climate change was a priority. Mr Carlgren said the visit allowed both countries to exchange experiences on new environment technologies. Mr Carlgren paid also a courtesy visit on The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister
- **9 June 2009** In the four years between 2005 and 2008, €3.321 million in lotto and other prizes had gone unclaimed, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question. The unclaimed money had been accredited to the Unclaimed Prizes Fund and subsequently to the Good Causes Fund.
- **9 June 2009** Up to the end of May there were 25,853 recipients of energy benefits, The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said in reply to a parliamentary question This compared with 27,439 in 2007 and 29,298 in 2008. The benefits were given to recipients of social benefits.
- **10 June 2009** Simon Busuttil, David Casa, Louis Grech, John Attard Montalto, Edward Scicluna and Joseph Cuschieri were elected in the European Parliament Elections. Joseph Cuschieri will take up Malta's sixth seat in the European Parliament once it will be allocated to Malta in terms of the Lisbon Treaty.

- **10 June 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister congratulated Malta's MEPs on their election and augured they would work together to get the best for Malta from the European Parliament. Dr Gonzi had a meeting with the MEPs at the Auberge de Castille.
- **10 June 2009** The role which the EU will assume with a view to addressing the problem of human trafficking holistically was discussed during a Foreign Ministers' meeting between Italy, Libya and Malta. The meeting was held in Rome and grouped The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italian Minister Franco Frattini, and Libya's Minister Mussa Kussa.
- **11 June 2009** Bathing water quality was high around Malta and Gozo last year, reaching 98.9 percent of the EU's mandatory values, a report issued by the EU showed. This was an increase of 3.4% over 2007.
- **11 June 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited the new extension at Malta International Airport. Previously an empty space separating the arrivals lounge from that of departures, the area was now a commercial one housing shops and restaurants. Dr Gonzi also visited an exhibition on the history of the air terminal in Malta since 1922.
- **11 June 2009** The number of Maltese going abroad between January and April increased by 5.1 percent to 82,387, said the NSO. Travellers to the UK were up by 21 percent.
- **12 June 2009** Solea Pharma invested two million euros in a new factory at Bulebel. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment inaugurated this factory, which employs 10 people and which will increase to 25 in the coming two years.
- **12 June 2009** The Radisson SAS Golden Sands Resort & Spa and the Paradise Bay Resort Hotel joined the eco-certification scheme and were presented with certificates and glass plaques by The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Malta Tourism Authority Chief Executive Officer Josef Formosa Gauci. Dr de Marco said that the eco-certification grown in popularity partly due to the ever increasing importance that hotel management and consumers had been giving to the environment.
- **12 June 2009** A new project aimed at raising the female employment rate was launched by the Employment and Training Corporation. The project was launched by ETC's CEO Sue Vella during a visit by Employment Commissioner Vladimir Spidla. The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy was also present for the launching. Following the visit to the ETC, Commissioner Spidla visited a centre for people with a disability run by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services.
- **13 June 2009** The counting of votes cast to elect councillors in 23 localities started at Naxxar counting centre. 77.19 percent of registered voters casted their vote in Mdina, Cospicua, Żabbar, Victoria, Birkirkara, Fgura, Gudja, Għarb, Għaxaq, Kalkara, Lija, Marsascala, Mgarr, Msida, Naxxar, Pieta, Rabat, San Ġwann, Sannat , Sliema, Tarxien, Xgħajra and Mtarfa. The highest percentage of voters was in Gudja - 87.1 percent, the lowest in Sliema, 64.84 percent. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).

- **13 June 2009** A national steering committee was set up to analyse how the country could counter the rising incidence of diabetes, said The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health at the launch of the Diabetes Association in Support of Youth. He said the association was set up to organise educational activities and entertainment for diabetic youth and their friends.
- **14 June 2009** The counting of votes in the local elections ended in all localities. Composition of the councils were known in Mdina, Cospicua, Zabbar, Victoria, Fgura, Gudja, Gharb, Ghaxaq, Kalkara, Lija, Marsascala, Mgarr, Msida, Naxxar, Pieta, Rabat, San Gwann, Sannat, Sliema, Tarxien, Xghajra and Mtarfa. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **15 June 2009** A group of 10 refugees from Somalia and Eritrea left Malta to begin a new life in the United States. Since the U.S. Embassy began its permanent refugee resettlement programme in May 2008, over 260 refugees have been resettled to the U.S.
- **15 June 2009** There are currently 216 lotto offices in Malta and Gozo, but it is up to the operator, Maltco, to decide whether or not to increase outlets within the limitation of not less than 150 but not more than 250, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **16 June 2009** The number of parents opting to collect and store their babies' cord blood rose to 165 last year, showed figures given in Parliament by The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy. It is said to help in the treatment of many types of devastating illnesses, including leukaemia and Hodgkin's lymphoma and blood and immune system genetic disorders.
- **16 June 2009** An interest subsidy scheme aimed at encouraging investment by hotels and restaurants was launched by The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. The scheme will fund 1.5 percent of the rate of interest on loans for refurbishment projects and 1% of the rate of interest for extension projects.
- **16 June 2009** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said at Ghadira that the beach cleaning system had been reformed. He said the old waste bins were being replaced by sets of grey and green wheelie bins, the former for recyclable materials and the other for the remaining waste. The minister said the beaches have been placed in three categories. Class A blue-flagged beaches such as Bugibba, Ghadira, St George's Bay, Pretty Bay and Golden Sands are being cleaned between 6 a.m., and 6 p.m. by uniformed beach cleaners, Class B beaches such as Armier, Gnejna and Mistra will be cleaned twice a day and the others once a day.
- **16 June 2009** Three yacht marinas will be privatised, said The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, during a press conference at Ta' Xbiex. Calls for bids for the 700-odd berths at the Msida and Ta' Xbiex yachting centres and Gozo's Mgarr Marina will be expected to be published.
- **17 June 2009** Vouchers for free energy saving bulbs have started being mailed to all households, The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said during a press conference in a hardware store in Bugibba. He said the vouchers can be exchanged by the end of October. Households will receive information on the approved shops and the participating suppliers.

- **18 June 2009** President Abela met the Pope at the Vatican City on his first official visit. Following the audience, the President met Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the secretary of state of the Holy See and he was hosted at an official dinner by Fra' Matthew Festing, Grandmaster and Prince of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Dr Abela was accompanied by Mrs Abela and The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- **18 June 2009** The low consumption of fruit and vegetables in Malta led the health authorities to launch a campaign aimed at increasing their consumption, ideally to more than five a day. The campaign was launched in Valletta by The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health.
- **18 June 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister attended the European Council meeting in Brussels. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and Malta's permanent representative in the EU Richard Cachia Caruana.
- **19 June 2009** A total of 2,775 irregular immigrants reached Malta last year and new applications for asylum numbered 2,608. The National Statistics Office said in a statement marking World Refugee Day that, during 2008, 84 boats carrying 2,775 irregular immigrants reached Maltese shores.
- **20 June 2009** A Maltese diplomatic office was opened in Ramallah in the Palestinian West Bank. The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, inaugurated the Malta office. Dr Borg held meetings with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki, the Minister of Economy, Basem Khoury and Home Affairs Minister Said Abu Ali. He also laid a wreath at the tomb of Yasser Arafat
- **21 June 2009** A Maltese Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel was inaugurated in a building shared with Cyprus. The embassy was inaugurated by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the embassy in Tel Aviv will be headed by Ambassador Abraham Borg. Dr Borg also had meetings with President Shimon Peres and Deputy Prime Minister Danny Meridor.
- **21 June 2009** Rock music will fuse with classical sounds in September during Rockestra, a concert organised to raise funds for the Malta Community Chest Fund. Speaking during a press conference to launch the concert, the President's wife, Margaret Abela, said it was important to work to raise funds for the Community Chest Fund, which helps a number of people in need.
- **21 June 2009** A government pavilion at this year's Trade Fair will be dedicated to education. The pavilion, themed 'Haddem mohhok... f'kull sens' (use your mind... in every sense), will screen an audiovisual production that will outline different levels of education.
- **22 June 2009** A 67.05 percent of pupils passed this year's Junior Lyceum entrance exams, with girls doing slightly better than boys, said the Education Ministry.
- **22 June 2009** The Retail Price Index in May remained unchanged from April at 118.65, said the NSO.
- **22 June 2009** Republic Square in Valletta, or, as it is better known, Queen's Square, took on an organised appearance due to an arrangement reached

between the Lands Department and the various cafes which put up tables on the historic square. The number of tables had now been reduced, and a wide passage has been opened up in front of and behind the statue of Queen Victoria.

- **23 June 2009** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister discussed illegal immigration and bilateral cooperation in education, tourism and trade when he had a meeting with Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius in Vilnius. The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs also had talks with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas.
- **23 June 2009** Private IT companies will benefit from a €10 million government spending spree this year in a bid to improve the public digital infrastructure. The Malta Information Technology Agency, the central driver of government's ICT policy, published a list of around 60 jobs for which it will issue calls for tenders over the next six months. IT Minister Austin Gatt said the information gave private companies ample time to prepare for the tender processes even by partnering with large international suppliers.
- **23 June 2009** There are currently 1,813 persons or companies registered for the aims of the eco-contribution, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **23 June 2009** Swedish Migration Minister Tobias Billström arrived in Malta for a short visit to discuss immigration with The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, ahead of Sweden's takeover of the EU presidency on July 1.
- **24 June 2009** Magistrate Silvio Meli was elected an executive member of the Association of European Competition Law Judges. His appointment was made in Rome during the association's eighth annual conference. Magistrate Meli is the president of the National Fair Trade Commission and author of the book Judgements of the Malta Commission for Fair Trading.
- **24 June 2009** Maltese embassies and consular offices had, up to the end of May, registered more requests for services and help than the whole of 2008, said the Foreign Ministry. The busiest were Malta's offices in Australia, which accounted for more than half the total of 7,500 contacts.
- **25 June 2009** St George's Bay acquired Blue Flag status making Malta the 38th country worldwide to have a beach of such high standards. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, said during the award ceremony, that Maltese beaches were of strategic tourism importance.
- **25 June 2009** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi had having official talks with his Swedish counterpart, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt. Dr Gonzi was hosted to a working lunch at the Rosenbad, the Prime Minister's office in Stockholm, discussing the EU Presidency work programme until the end of the year.
- **25 June 2009** The Sino-Maltese Mixed Economic and Trade Commission discussed the issue of visas for Chinese people wishing to visit Malta and the mutual recognition of diplomas and taxation frameworks. The commission, co-chaired by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment and Chinese vice-Minister of Commerce Jiang Zengwei, met in Malta following the signing of an agreement in February on investment promotion and protection, which laid the legal foundation for cooperation.

- **25 June 2009** Between January 1 and June 2009 Malta Enterprise approved start-up assistance to 12 new enterprises for the creation of 303 new jobs. The industries were in the ICT, aviation, engineering, printing and medical devices areas. Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said that over the same period, Malta Enterprise also approved assistance for 17 existent enterprises to expand, in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **26 June 2009** Malta, Switzerland and Mexico concluded an agreement to promote online diplomatic training with special focus on new teaching methods. The agreement, in the form of a memorandum of understanding, was signed in Geneva by the Ambassadors of Malta, Switzerland and Mexico.
- **26 June 2009** Affluence abounded in the north of the island. According to the National Statistics Office, the average disposable income for households was highest in the western district, which includes among others the localities of Attard, Lija, Balzan, Siġġiewi and Rabat.
- **26 June 2009** Eleven-year-old Amy Zahra was awarded the Pope John XXIII Kindness award for helping out her friend and classmate Jessica Bezzina who suffered from a rare developmental disorder. The award was given to her by President George Abela.
- **27 June 2009** City Gate will be replaced by an eight-metre wide breach in the bastions, according to Renzo Piano's new plans for the entrance to Valletta. This was revealed in a ceremony. Freedom Square will be replaced by two interconnecting building blocks on stilts which will be Malta's first ever Parliament House. The Opera House site will become an open air theatre incorporating the old ruins, and the site will also serve as a piazza when there will be no performances. The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister greeted the designs and said the project should unite all the people in pride for their capital city. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said the current generation would hand over a better Valletta to future generations. The project, costing €80 million, is expected to be taken in hand early next year and completed in four years. (More information can be found on the DOI website www.doi.gov.mt).
- **27 June 2009** Maltese travellers should exercise caution when travelling to Pakistan, especially in the whereabouts of mass political gatherings organised in certain parts of the country, said the Foreign Ministry. It advised Maltese nationals in Pakistan to register themselves with Malta's consulates in Karachi and Lahore and keep them informed of their movements in the country.
- **27 June 2009** People travelling abroad should take precautions to avoid getting the H1N1 virus, said the Health Department. It was prudent that people who were sick did not travel as this would be risky for them and others.
- **27 June 2009** The Treasury has received over 1,000 applications for a value exceeding the amount of stock issued by the government. The response from both small and institutional investors was described as positive.
- **28 June 2009** The Pope's Special Envoy for the Pauline Year, Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, met Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi during a courtesy visit at Auberge de Castille. Cardinal Antonelli visited sites linked to the presence of St Paul in Malta.

- **28 June 2009** President George Abela visited the OASI Foundation in Gozo, where he was greeted by the Foundation's Founder and Director, Fr Manuel Cordina, and the board of directors. Residents of the anti-drug and alcohol abuse foundation shared their experiences with Dr Abela.
- **29 June 2009** The Pope's Special Envoy for the Pauline Year, Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, led a national celebration, on the steps of St John's Co-Cathedral, to mark the conclusion of the Pauline Year. The open air celebration was attended by thousands of people, led by President George Abela and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **30 June 2009** Eleven turtles were released back to the sea after had been rehabilitated from injuries they suffered in a facility at San Lucjan Tower in Marsaxlokk. The turtles were released at Golden Bay in the presence of pupils from eco-skola and The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs
- **30 June 2009** The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism spoke about the Merħba (Welcome) training programme which, so far, has trained more than 1,750 key tourism personnel by utilising €613,000 in EU funds. The Malta Tourism Authority was granted more funding to develop a Trainers' Resource Pack, as part of this programme. The pack was developed to serve as a training aid for managers of tourism establishments and related support services to train their staff.
- **30 June 2009** The Mnarja Annual Agricultural Festival was held in Buskett gardens. President George Abela together with The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, visited this festival, casually talking to exhibitors and families. Mr Pullicino handed out awards to competitors participating in this festival.

July

1 July 2009 June was warmer than the 30-year average and also drier than the norm, said the Meteorological Office. The mean temperature was 23.7 °C which was 0.7 °C more than the climate norm. The warmest day in June was on the 12th when the thermometer peaked to 32.8°C, whilst the lowest temperature in June was 15.5°C on the 4th.

1 July 2009 A Maltese parliamentary delegation will be visiting China between 2nd July and July 8. The delegation, led by Foreign and European Affairs committee chairman Michael Frendo, will also include Nationalist MPs Francis Agius and Charlo' Bonnici and Labour MPs George Vella, Leo Brincat, and Luciano Busuttil. It will seek to enhance the long standing good relations and close cooperation between Malta and China.

1 July 2009 The regeneration of Fort St Elmo will be tackled in three phases, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said in a reply to a parliamentary question. The consecutive phases will tackle Upper St Elmo, Lower St Elmo and Evans Building.

2 July 2009 Another two cases of swine flu had been confirmed in Malta, bringing the total to four. Parliamentary Secretary Mario Galea said that doctors were treating two men for H1N1.

2 July 2009 The Ball of the August Moon will be held at the Verdala Palace on August 1. The ball was launched by President and Mrs George Abela and all proceeds will go for the Malta Community Chest Fund. Taking part in the ball will be the Armed Forces of Malta band and the Renzo Spiteri Quintet, accompanied by singer Nadine Axisa.

3 July 2009 The number of confirmed Swine Flu cases in Malta rose to 16. All 16 patients responded to treatment and were not seriously ill. Dr Ray Busuttil, Director-General of Health, said it was very important that people who were abroad and felt flu symptoms on their return should not go out but call a doctor, thus avoiding the spread of the disease. Anybody who felt the symptoms while abroad should, responsibly, not board the plane but call a doctor. A helpline with number 21324086 was set up. An information leaflet is available on pdf at www.doi.gov.mt and [http://www.health.gov.mt/dsu/Influenza%20A\(H1N1\)/swine_broch.pdf](http://www.health.gov.mt/dsu/Influenza%20A(H1N1)/swine_broch.pdf)

3 July 2009 A 170-berth yacht marina and a 1.5km long promenade will be part of a master plan for the regeneration of the Marsa menqa (creek) and this was announced by The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. The Minister Gatt said this was a major project to transform a site previously associated with heavy industry into an area for recreation and entertainment. The project also involved landscaping and the restoration of buildings, including the old Chadwick stores, built by Lord Chadwick, which will be used for offices. The top floor will be reserved for entertainment owing to the building's prime position opposite the Grand Harbour fairway.

3 July 2009 The first outbreaks of Swine Flu in Malta had predictably brought about a surge of people asking to be tested for the virus, but no one else tested positive, said The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care. Mr Galea said the swabs of the confirmed cases had been sent to the World Health Organisation, which had been monitoring the spread of the virus worldwide and examining the outbreaks.

3 July 2009 Gozo would be declared a tourism zone, meaning that all shops could remain open till late and operate on Sundays and public holidays too, said Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi whilst addressing the Gozo regional sub-committee of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD).

4 July 2009 A civil amenity site was inaugurated today at Tal-Kus, near Xewkija in Gozo. The site is the fifth to be opened in Malta and Gozo. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said the sites served an important purpose for the collection of separated bulky waste. The site was developed with EU funding and covers an area of 2,400 sq metres. Gozo. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information were present for the inauguration.

4 July 2009 The Health Department appealed to all those suspecting Swine Flu not to go to hospital emergency departments or clinics but to stay at home and call a doctor. All those having symptoms of the virus could also phone on the help line 2132 4086.

5 July 2009 The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment was present at the signing ceremony of an agreement of partnership between two Companies DHL Cold Chain and Express trailers Limited. The agreement will enable the pharmaceutical industry to benefit from an international network.

5 July 2009 A delegation of Austrian and Maltese executive and non-executive directors of Volksbank Malta Ltd paid a courtesy visit to President George Abela. The President welcomed Volksbank Malta chairman Winston V. Zahra, Vice Chairman Werner Wess, Managing Director Herbert Skok and Director Joseph Bugelli at The Palace in Valletta. During the visit, the President was briefed on the commercial activity pursued by the Maltese bank with an Austrian background, in particular its contribution to the local economy.

6 July 2009 A delegation from CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) which was in Malta to discuss collaboration with Malta, notably with the Malta Council for Science and Technology, had a meeting with Dr Gonzi at the Auberge de Castille. Leading the CERN delegation was scientist Professor John Ellis and researcher Emmanuel Tsemelis.

6 July 2009 The number of refugees with regular working permits is currently 50, said The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy in reply to a parliamentary question.

6 July 2009 During 2008 there were 1,337 persons who were given government employment for the first time, said Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi in a reply to a parliamentary question.

6 July 2009 The School of Art in Valletta was a veritable "museum" that required restoration and rehabilitation, said, The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, during open day visit. Ms Cristina said also a fund for the arts had been set up and would be launched in the coming weeks.

7 July 2009 More than 2,000 people visited Malta's embassy in Berlin during an open day as part of the All Nations Festival. Tourism promotional material about the Maltese islands was distributed, questions on Maltese cultural life were answered and flight logistics to reach the Maltese islands from Berlin were explained. Visitors were also introduced to the possibility of learning English in Malta.

7 July 2009 There are 563 students following full-time courses at the Institute of Tourism Studies. Of these, 105 have completed the first year of their course and had been spending 14 weeks in local industrial trade practice in hotels, restaurants and other hospitality establishments. The Hon Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said in a reply to a parliamentary question, that 99 other students had started a 52-week internship in England, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Jersey, Italy, Belgium or Switzerland, after training in hotels or catering establishments in Malta during the first and second years of their courses.

8 July 2009 The number of confirmed cases of A (H1N1) rose to 48, said The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in a press conference. He also said that it was evident that this was community transmission and that in line with the guidelines of the World Health Organisation, Malta would now move from containment to mitigation. Patients showing symptoms would be administered anti-virals if they were in vulnerable groups and swabbing would take place randomly. Mr Galea insisted that people who felt unwell should stay at home and not go to work.

8 July 2009 Fewer passengers crossed between Malta and Gozo in the second quarter of this year, although more ferry trips were performed, said the NSO.

9 July 2009 Various MEPA policy functions are to be transferred to a new policy unit within the Office of the Prime Minister in terms of the reform of the authority, announced by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. The authority will then focus on its role

as regulator. It will also no longer be responsible for transport planning, mineral resources, climate change issues and the management of construction sites. (More information can be found on the DOI website <http://www.doi.gov.mt/en/News/newsitems/newspage.asp>.)

9 July 2009 Malta Enterprise launched the island's first pharmaceutical patent directory. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment hailed the move, saying the directory would serve as another tool in the marketing efforts to promote Malta as an ideal and investor-friendly pharmaceutical base.

9 July 2009 Training sessions for councillors started as part of the local council reform. These sessions will focus on the basic skills needed for councillors to work effectively. They will also focus on legislation, the principles and procedures of bye-laws, financing, good governance, teamwork and leadership skills. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, said there would also be experts from the Council of Europe in Malta to create performance indicators for local councils.

9 July 2009 During the first six months of 2009 the police arraigned 90 persons on charges of fraud, said The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs in a reply to a parliamentary question.

10 July 2009 Injured and abandoned strays will now be rescued by the two new animal ambulances that were launched by The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. Government signed an agreement with Animal Non Government Organisation Noah's Arc to fund and operate this service. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs thanked all NGOs who dedicated their lives to protecting animals.

10 July 2009 A campaign to encourage people to become nurses was launched. The campaign – that involves television and radio adverts and handing out of leaflets – aimed to ensure young people understand the versatility of the profession. University courses had been decreased from four years to three. The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, said the demand for nurses was consistently so qualified nurses were guaranteed job security in the next few years.

10 July 2009 The government will be allocating €250,000 to be used by local councils in the organisation of events in their localities next year. This was launched by The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information and The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism. The scheme would serve as an incentive for councils to enhance their localities' cultural heritage through the promotion of traditional activities and the enrichment of local artistic skills and talents.

10 July 2009 President George Abela visited Mount Carmel Hospital and he was introduced to the staff working at the hospital by The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care. Until 2020, mental health problems will be the second most common disease, exceeding vascular illnesses.

11 July 2009 The special schools reform was launched by The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. The reform will give a specialised service by means of its resource centres to students attending mainstream schools, while offering support and training to its employees. It will also introduce new educational systems to students with individual special needs as well as sharing good practices and methodologies of teaching staff.

11 July 2009 The 60-hour Ohloq Tbissima marathon started to raise funds for the missions in the care of the Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP) in Malta, Peru, Pakistan and the Philippines. President and Mrs George Abela, Gozo Bishop Mgr Mario Grech, the regional superior of MSSP, Fr Louis Mallia, and St Joseph's home director Fr Frankie Cini, inaugurated the seventh edition of the marathon at St Joseph's home, St Venera. After the opening the President mingled with the volunteers running the marathon and the boys resident at St Joseph's home. The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister paid a visit at St Joseph's home.

12 July 2009 The Malta-Sicily electricity grid interconnection project was given the final green light when EU ministers approved the nearly €4 billion energy package, funds allocated through the European Economic Recovery Plan and derived from the unspent portion of the EU budget.

13 July 2009 Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith started a two-day visit during which he had talks with Foreign Minister Tonio Borg. The talks focused on Malta-Australia political and trade relations, issues relating to the Maltese community in Australia and relations between Australia and the EU.

14 July 2009 Malta's Embassy in Paris promoted Malta as a competitive and efficient jurisdiction for financial, commercial and industrial activities. Several events were organised over the past months to present the financial services and other major industries in Malta.

14 July 2009 The Education Ministry said that there was an improvement in the pass rate for SEC exams. In a statement, the Ministry explained that exams were held in 33 subjects at an Ordinary level. The highest number of candidates for Paper A was in Maltese, while the highest number of Paper B candidates was for Maths.

15 July 2009 The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications announced at a news conference the annual HSBC Premier Valletta Boat Show which will be held at Dock No. 1 in Cospicua. Most of the boats at the show are owned by international exhibitors and some 50 to 60 boatpeople will be participating. A temporary marina will be created along with a floating pontoon to serve as a bridge for easy access to the boats.

15 July The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, visited the stand at Mater Dei Hospital foyer, which had been set up for prospective students interested in the health care courses offered by the Institute of Health Care (IHC) of the University of Malta. Prospective students may obtain information and discuss their interest with academic members of staff, present at the stand.

15 July 2009 A number of medical providers have sought full scale international accreditation, in an effort to boost medical tourism, said Parliamentary Secretary for Health Joe Cassar during the Malta Medical Tourism Summit. The aim of the summit was to promote Malta as a destination for medical travel and tourism.

16 July 2009 Maltese qualifications will be recognised and comparable with those acquired in other EU countries and beyond, said The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, during the launch of the National Qualifications Framework report in relation to the European Qualifications Framework, drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council.

16 July 2009 The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism said, during an information meeting for tour operators on a subsidy scheme that the primary aim of this project was to upgrade Malta's accommodation and catering

sectors in order to match tourists' expectations, whilst offering good product value. Dr de Marco added that the government earmarked €300,000 of national funds on a yearly basis for a period of 10 years in a bid to assist hotel and restaurants operators to invest in their establishments.

17 July 2009 A national cultural policy will be launched for consultation said The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, whilst speaking during a meeting with the leaders of cultural entities. The minister expressed also her wish for a cultural calendar listing all activities being held. The minister said that a cultural policy for children was also needed to encourage the young population appreciate culture from a tender age.

17 July 2009 A group of young Maltese carrying out voluntary work with 92 children in Tunis, animated a mass attended by Ambassador Vicki Ann Cremona and Kurt Vella Fonde from the Embassy of Malta in Tunis. The group later spent a pleasant evening discussing their work with embassy officials at the ambassador's residence.

18 July 2009 An increase in requests for travel-related information prompted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to publish a manual for travellers and it was launched by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The manual contained information on travel documents, such as passports and visas, and procedures to follow in certain circumstances, like getting married or being involved in accidents abroad. It also listed details on embassies and consuls overseas.

19 July 2009 More than 1,100 additional yachting berths will be created under a Malta Maritime Authority proposal to build 13 permanent and temporary marinas. The decision was taken following the publication of a consultation document.

20 July 2009 The The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, visited the University Gozo Centre of the University, where the University of Malta offered advice on the choice of university courses to more than 200 students who for the past two years attended a Matsec Course at the Sir M.A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies. The University Gozo Centre was inaugurated in 1992 and offered a range of short courses.

21 July 2009 Forty trees were donated by The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land to offset papers he used last year. The trees are endemic to Malta and would be immediately replaced should they die or get a tree disease. The trees had been planted in Tarxien, Paola, Ghaxaq and Gudja.

22 July 2009 Malta's High Commissioner in London, Joseph Zammit Tabona, joined Margot Wallström, vice president of the EC and other EU ambassadors in a Cycle Diplomacy ride from the residence of the Swedish Ambassador in Central London to Hampstead Heath – where a unique event with an environmental theme was held. This was a Swedish EU Presidency initiative to promote the green agenda in general and green transportation in particular.

22 July 2009 The 2011 International Council of Nurses Congress will be held in Malta, said Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses during a press conference. The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy was present for this press conference. Mr Pace thanked the government for its support saying that without it, it would have been impossible to organise such an event. He also thanked The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy, the Malta Tourism Authority, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Associations and other organisations which had lent a helping hand. The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy thanked the union for promoting Malta so successfully.

23 July 2009 Mrs Cristina visited the Junior College at Msida, where the building is being extended in a €1.5 million project which will include eight lecture rooms and 20 tutorial rooms. The project will include energy saving measures such as insulated roofs and double glazing. The project has been financed through EU funds.

23 July 2009 The Retail Price Index went down by 0.43 percent, last month, reflecting primarily a drop of 1.41 percent in the food index. The National Statistics Office said this was mainly on account of lower vegetable prices

23 July 2009 Malta Freeport Terminals invested €24.5 million in four huge tandem cranes which can handle the largest existing or planned container ships. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications toured the freeport on the occasion of the arrival of these four new quay cranes

23 July 2009 The Maltese rock group Beangrowers represented Malta in the first edition of the festival Europe des Cultures, organised by the Mairie de Paris and the Mairie of the 19th arrondissement of Paris. The crowd included members of the Maltese Community in Paris. Malta's Ambassador Mark A. Miggiani, accompanied by Caroline Miggiani, were also present. The Embassy of Malta in Paris coordinated the participation of the group at this Festival.

24 July 2009 The 52-hour volleyball marathon held to raise funds for the Dar tal-Providenza kicked off and it was inaugurated by President George Abela. More than 200 volunteers and 35 players took part.

24 July 2009 The stock of licensed motor vehicles rose by 3,666 in the second quarter this year, to stand at 299,474. The National Statistics Office said that 75.9 percent were private vehicles, while commercial vehicles accounted for 16.1 percent.

25 July 2009 A gift free Istrina will be organised by the Community Chest Fund this year following an agreement reached with Public Broadcasting Services, said President George Abela during a news conference. He said that the value of Maltese society was that it did not have to get something in return to assist those in need. L-Istrina will be held on December 26 and will be broadcast from the Lufthansa Technik hangar, which has been offered for the purpose.

25 July 2009 Occupational therapist Claire Busuttill was awarded the Mount Carmel Hospital worker of the year award. The award was presented by the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Care Mario Galea.

26 July 2009 All the energy saving bulb vouchers had been sent, said the government. These amounted to 130,000 vouchers. The Resources Ministry said in a statement that through this measure, Maltese and Gozitan families were being assisted to adopt energy saving measures and safeguard the environment.

26 July 2009 A draft of an updated national youth policy will be published said The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport during a Maltese and English youth exchange organised by the Youth Catholic Action Group of Mosta. He said that all those interested will be able to make their suggestions before the policy is finalised. The draft will be available at www.education.gov.mt. The aim of the policy will be to assist young Maltese people in their personal and social development.

27 July 2009 The team behind Porn, the Musical, which was the first full-fledged local musical to be performed at the prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival, paid a courtesy call to The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. The Prime Minister wished the team the very best in their endeavours.

27 July 2009 More than 1,000 reports were made by people about what to them was abuse of public property through the freephone number 1577 that was launched at the end of 2008. All of the 1,017 reports received were investigated and the absolute majority turned out to be genuine cases. Most of the reports were about squatters on public land and on the abuse of encroachment permits, said The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues.

28 July 2009 Resources Minister George Pullicino, visited the cathedral where work on the restoration of the façades of St John's Co-Cathedral on Republic, Merchant and Sta Lucia Streets had been nearing conclusion. Resources Minister George Pullicino said during this visit, that the Resources Ministry is also involved in the rehabilitation of the façades of the Palace, the Library, the Auberge de Castille, Maison Demandols, Liesse Church and the bastions overlooking Barriera Wharf and under the Siege Bell Memorial, all in Valletta.

28 July 2009 Almost a third of the Marsascala Bypass rebuilding project had been completed, said The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. He said major sections of the road were being re-aligned to remove dangerous bends which had become accident black spots. The project also involved the surfacing of roads being used as alternative routes.

28 July 2009 The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport visited the young applicants at the Malta College for Science, Arts and Technology to congratulate them and thank them for choosing the opportunities the government had offered. Some 3,000 students will be expected to apply.

28 July 2009 The Parish Priest of Kalkara was handed the keys to the chapel of Our Saviour by The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. The chapel, situated behind the former Bighi Hospital at the tip of the San Salvatore peninsula, had been restored. It was built in 1651 by Prior Fra Giovanni Bichi on designs by Lorenzo Gafà.

29 July 2009 Prime Minister Gonzi congratulated researchers Professor Joseph N. Grima and co-workers Daphne Attard, Ruben Gatt, and Richard N. Cassar from the Department of Chemistry of the University of Malta at the Auberge de Castille. The Maltese researchers have developed a new route for the manufacturing of high value-added auxetic foams from ordinary, cheaply available, conventional foam. These auxetic foams exhibit the unusual property of getting fatter when stretched rather than thinner. The Prime Minister also welcomed the collaboration with industry in this research project.

29 July 2009 The area in front of the Roman Villa in Rabat known as I-ghalqa ta' Kola was being surfaced but care would be taken to preserve possible archaeological remains buried underneath. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs visited the site. The site will continue to be used for parking, although in a more organised manner.

29 July 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care said that air conditioners in homes for the elderly were being checked daily and more than €600,000 had been spent in the installation of ACs, chillers and in maintenance this year, whilst speaking during a news conference that gave information about the work of the Heat Wave Committee. The menu for elderly residents had also been adapted and it included more fresh fruit and vegetables to help avoid dehydration. He said that the sun should be avoided between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m and one should drink lots of water and keep a wet towel to freshen up.

29 July 2009 Traffic accidents in the second quarter of this year fell by 379 to 3,694 when compared to that of last year. The National Statistics Office said that although drops were recorded in all districts, the majority of accidents occurred in the west.

30 July 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care, toured the new €6 million block at St Vincent de Paule Home which will accommodate up to 144 elderly residents. The new block included two wards specially designed for patients who suffer from dementia.

30 July 2009 Alfred Fiorini Lowell had been reappointed chairman of the Public Service Commission. Jeanette Laferla was appointed deputy chairman and Yvonne Micallef Stafrace, Mary Vella and Tonio Farrugia would be members. Being a commission included in the Constitution, members of the Commission will be appointed by the President of Malta acting on the advice of the Prime Minister.

31 July 2009 Fish caught in the second quarter of the year rose by almost 43 per cent to 367,752 kilograms over the same period last year, according to National Statistics Office. There was a steady increase across all the most popular fish caught in Maltese waters except for stone bass or dott, as it is known in Maltese, which fell by 23.8 per cent.

August

1 August 2009 The weather in July was characterized by the temperature spike and also by low humidity, according to a report issued by the Met Office at Malta International Airport. The maximum air temperature over Malta reached 41.6°C. The mean temperature in last July was 27.0°C which was 1.0°C more than the climate norm, whilst the lowest temperature last July was 18.5°C and this was recorded on July 21st and 22nd.

1 August 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care said, in a press conference, that the H1N1 swine flu vaccine would not be administered in Malta before it was declared safe by the World Health Organisation. The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care said that a safety certified vaccine is expected to be issued in January and Malta had placed an order for 500,000 doses.

1 August 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister closed off a national conference that discussed MEPA reform. The Prime Minister and The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, who has been entrusted with the reform, sat throughout the conference listening and taking note of the various issues raised. Different stakeholders, including NGOs, MEPA employees, developers and architects took part in the conference. Some slight changes were made to the original reform document; the most significant being that the proposed voluntary screening process would be given a four-week term and MEPA would undertake to validate an application in two weeks.

1 August 2009 Restoration works were being carried out at the Military Heritage Park, situated inside the Lascaris War Rooms, Valletta, by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment visited the place and

promised the heritage organisation €200,000 from the Good Causes Fund, which will be distributed over three years to cover the expenses.

1 August 2009 A pamphlet listing all the public libraries in Malta and Gozo was published by the Department of Information and the Department of Libraries and Archives. The publication, called *Issellef u Aqra* (borrow and read), lists all public libraries by locality, address, telephone number, e-mail address, website, opening hours and facilities available. The pamphlet was launched during an event at Santa Margerita Square, Cospicua, to promote reading, which saw the participation of The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. Dr Said presented donations and vouchers to public libraries to strengthen their collection.

1 August 2009 A total of 100 jobless would be drawn into the labour force under a pilot project that will have them doing community service and earning 75 per cent of the minimum wage. This was launched by The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy. The pilot project will be targeting 70 Maltese and 30 Gozitans from an eligible 373 and will last six months. Sixty local councils and three NGOs had signed up to the scheme to offer jobs and a private company would be carrying out 100 inspections a week to ensure conditions were being adhered to.

2 August 2009 The Housing Authority was revising its rent subsidy schemes in line with the rent reform, said The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy at a press conference following the passage through Parliament of the Rent Reform Bill. The new law will come into force on January 1 2010. It also applied to government rented properties and tenants living in government rented properties. An information booklet on the reform was also launched.

2 August 2009 The Hon President Dr George Abela and Mrs Abela hosted the August Moon Ball at Verdala Palace. Among those present were The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and Mrs Gonzi, His Honour the Chief Justice Vincent A. De Gaetano and Mrs Degaetano, the Opposition Leader and Mrs Muscat and the President Emeritus and Mrs Fenech Adami. This was one of the first activities under the new presidency organised by the Malta Community Chest Fund.

3 August 2009 The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs launched new building site regulations aimed at reducing risks to third parties. They also introduced faster measures of redress when damages will be caused. Minister George Pullicino said the need for these regulations was borne out by the fact that 60 percent of development applications before MEPA now involved redevelopment, on sites which were inevitably surrounded by other buildings.

3 August 2009 The recompression chamber at Gozo General Hospital was used three times by divers in the year since it was opened, said the Gozo Ministry. The ministry marked the year since the inauguration of the Hyperbaric Unit - which included the recompression chamber - by holding an open day for diving schools in Gozo. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo visited the unit.

3 August 2009 Paceville had a single rubbish collection system, which should put a stop to the accumulation of garbage disposed of at all hours. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism instructed the St Julians local council to issue a bye-law to regulate the time of the disposal of garbage by commercial establishments, in order to avoid rubbish accumulating for hours before it will be collected.

3 August 2009 The third edition of the Malta Baby & Kids Directory and www.maltababyandkids.com, sponsored by HSBC, was launched at Inspire, Marsascala in the presence of the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Kate Gonzi. The new book is also available at the click of a mouse, which means subscriber will have the option to get the information online, in print or both.

4 August 2009 The Government's Public Cleansing Department acquired new equipment which The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said would enable it to clean up arterial roads more frequently. The equipment included eight tipper vans, nine tipper trucks, three mechanical sweepers, a loading van, two refuse vehicles, a skip loader, 10 skips, two vans and two wheel loaders. Mr Pullicino said the department was responsible for the cleanliness of 450km of arterial road, the bulky refuse service and beach cleaning. The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, toured the Government's Public Cleansing Department in Corradino with The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs.

5 August 2009 New regulations regulating gaming machines and the arcades will be accepted to be moved for Parliament's approval after summer, said the government. It said in a statement that the regulations, which were approved by the government, will be aimed at addressing abuse and protect people at risk.

5 August 2009 The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment launched the pre-budget document during a news conference. The document contained an economic analysis of the current situation and outlined the sectors the government wanted to address. The minister invited the public to take part in the debate on the document. He also presented a statistical exercise comparing the situation in Malta to that in other EU countries. Feedback may be submitted to budget2010@gov.mt.

6 August 2009 The Hon. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi paid a visit to the children who are members of the Kidstart summer club, held at St Theresa Junior Lyceum in Mriehel. In the classrooms, children showed off their art and craft skills and introduced the Prime Minister to their pet birds and rabbit, which they care for as part of a class. The children asked Dr Gonzi about his personal life and the environment.

6 August 2009 A public library which was revamped by a small group of inmates from the Corradino Correctional Facilities was passed on from the Education Ministry to the Paola Local Council. The inmates painted the library, named after poet and trade unionist Karmenu Ellul Galea, constructed a ramp to make it more accessible and carried out other works which were necessary. Present for this occasion were the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land.

6 August 2009 Excavation works being carried out in the fields at Mgarr ix-Xini were trying to establish the origins of the troughs in the valley and in the surrounding fields. The works, which had been ongoing since 2005, was visited by The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo. The works formed part of a project by the Regional Park Committee of the Mgarr ix-Xini valley set up between the Xewkija and Sannat councils. The excavations are being carried out in collaboration with the university's faculty of archaeology and the Cultural Heritage Superintendence.

6 August 2009 A fund of €100,000 was set up to help civil organisations tap into EU funds to finance their projects. The fund, inaugurated by The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, will aim to co-finance projects that are partly funded by the EU and is similar to one launched earlier this year for local councils.

7 August 2009 Arthur Galea Salomone was appointed as the new chairman of the Malta Stock Exchange. The government said that Antoine Fiott was appointed as the Deputy Chairman, whilst Richard Sladden, Karen Spiteri Bailey and Charlotte Attard were appointed as Directors. Dr Galea Salomone graduated as a lawyer from the University of Malta in 1988. As a commonwealth scholar, he read international commercial law at the University of Toronto and had practiced widely in corporate and commercial law. He had been deputy chairman of the Malta Stock Exchange since June 2000.

7 August 2009 The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land handed over the Xlendi tower to the Munxar local council and Din l-Art Ħelwa who plan to restore the 1650 building. This was the first time that a public site was devoluted jointly to two entities to work for the same cause. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information was also present during the signing of the devolution.

8 August 2009 Exports plummeted by almost €300 million in the first six months of the year but this was mitigated by an even more drastic drop in imports of almost €385 million, resulting in an improved trade gap. Figures released by the National Statistics Office showed the trade gap improved by €88.5 million when compared to the same period last year.

9 August 2009 The government set up a €330,000 fund for art, aimed at helping artists developing their talent as well as broadening the audience's cultural experience. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment launched the fund during an event in front of representatives of the artistic and cultural community. Details of the fund are available on the Education Ministry website www.education.gov.mt/artsfund.htm or by e-mailing artsfund.mecd@gov.mt.

10 August 2009 Malta's health authorities would administer swine flu jabs the beginning of next year even as the World Health Organisation changed tack about the safety of earlier vaccines. Director General of health Ray Busuttill said that they still needed to see more evidence about the safety of the vaccines that will be available in October.

11 August 2009 The Resources Ministry set up a committee to propose measures which Malta may take to adapt to the impact of climate change. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs explained that Malta, as a small island, was vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and the government was taking initiatives to prepare the country as best as possible. The Malta strategy will focus on areas that are being adversely affected by climate change such as health and socio-economic policy, water and flooding, biodiversity and agriculture.

11 August 2009 Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 6.7 percent during the first six months of 2009, driven mainly by outlays on retirement pensions, said the NSO.

11 August 2009 Twelve bids were submitted for three yacht marina facilities being offered by the government as part of its privatisation process. The Privatisation Unit said it received 12 bids for the Msida Yachting Centre (Msida Gardens pontoons A to G), Ta Xbiex Yachting Centre pontoons H to O) and Mgarr (Gozo) Marina. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment launched the privatization process.

11 August 2009 The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs and The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism visited the widened promenade in Dragonara Road, St Julians, which linked St George's Bay to Paceville, St Julians and Sliema. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs and The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism called on the public's cooperation to keep these areas clean and in good shape

12 August 2009 The government published guidelines for the registration of consultants who wished to work on environment impact assessments (EIAs). The guidelines, which are part of the MEPA reform proposals, were announced by The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism. Details can be found on www.rrb.gov.mt.

13 August 2009 The Malta Tourism Authority will be extending its network of tourist information offices to cover more tourist zones, said The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism. He was speaking at the inauguration of a new office at Mellieha, set up in collaboration with the local council. Another information office would be opened in Mdina and talks would be started with other local councils. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism presented also the national prize of the European Destination of Excellence to the Mayor, Robert Cutajar, during the inauguration ceremony.

13 August 2009 The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, inspected works being carried out at the Girls Junior Lyceum in Hamrun, which will cost €350,000. During the inspection, she also said that just over half of the pupils who sat for Junior Lyceum resits have passed their exams. Resits had been held for the first time and 58.7 percent had passed.

14 August 2009 More than 11,000 contacts were made with Maltese embassies abroad in the first seven months of the year, said The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He said that 20,000 copies of a travel manual printed by the ministry had been distributed in a few weeks and 1,500 people a day were visiting the ministry's website.

14 August 2009 The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism visited Hotel Juliani in St Julians after it was awarded the Expedia Select Insider Award. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism said that Expedia was one of the largest online booking engines in the world with some 85,000 worldwide hotels registered. Five Maltese hotels made it to the prestigious Select Insider List.

15 August 2009 Maria Abela, the daughter of the Hon. President Dr George Abela, got married to Paolo Marconi in a ceremony at Tarxien parish church. She was the first daughter of a Maltese head of state to have emerged as a bride from San Anton Palace, accompanied by her family. The Palace facade and the chapel were decorated with flowers for the occasion.

16 August 2009 The Malta Red Cross - Gozo Branch was engaged by the Ministry of Gozo to provide lifeguard services at Ramla Bay. The society has a life guard contingent that had been trained according to International Life Saving Society's (ILS) standards. ILS are the main regulators in this sector in Europe. The Ministry said the Red Cross divers are also placing marker buoys near the wrecks of the MV Xlendi, MV Karwela and MV Cominoland, making it easier for divers to locate them.

17 August 2009 The Maltese embassy in Berlin included Malta in the Berlin Buddy Bear travelling collection. The exhibition consists of a large number of big Berlin buddy bears representing different countries. The exhibition travels to different countries and

destinations, promoting the symbols and cultures of countries via their artistic impressions painted on a gesso Berlin bear. The Foreign Ministry said the embassy negotiated the inclusion of the Malta Buddy Bear free of charge.

18 August 2009 A Maltese woman, 82, died in hospital from complications of A (H1N1) swine flu, said the Health Department. It was the first death from swine flu in Malta. The department said she formed part of a group of people who were classified as being vulnerable since she suffered from a chronic heart and respiratory conditions. The Health Department reiterated its advice for people to wash their hands frequently and to avoid going out if they have flu symptoms but to call a doctor at home. Anyone needing information should phone on 21 324086.

19 August 2009 The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications toured the Boiler Wharf quay at Senglea point where workers were putting the final touches to the new spill-over berth for cruise liners. Boiler Wharf will be operated by the Malta Maritime Authority. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said that the project had cost €566,000. A disused building will also be turned into an industrial museum showing 19th century tools and equipment.

19 August 2009 The water taxi service came into operation when The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications toured Boiler Wharf in Senglea. He said passengers could opt to cross the harbour from Senglea to Valletta using the services of the water taxi operator, as well as the traditional Barklori.

20 August 2009 Malta's First Assistant Director of Education responsible for Special Educational Needs within the Education Division, George W. Samuel, passed away, aged 74, said the Education Ministry. It said that Malta had lost a great educator, particularly in the field of special education needs. Mr Samuel was instrumental for the introduction of the peripatetic service for home tuition for students with special needs. Apart from his official duties, Mr Samuel was for many years Honorary Secretary of the Malta Society for the Blind and was later elected president of the same society. He was also president of the Dun Manwel Attard Wardija school council, and carried out work at the Millennium Chapel in Paceville.

20 August 2009 Occupational accidents decreased by 29.1 percent between April and June compared to the same months last year, said the NSO. It said there were 858 non-fatal accidents at work as well as one death.

20 August 2009 An Employment Aid Programme co-financed by the European Union assisted 65 companies by providing €450,000 for the employment of disadvantaged workers or workers with a disability. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, said the programme was helping such people integrate in society and gain work experience. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information visited Casa Arkati, one of the companies in the programme.

21 August 2009 Dr George Hyzler informed The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister that he would be unable to continue serving as acting President, for personal reasons. He thanked Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and his predecessor President Emeritus Eddie Fenech Adami for the confidence shown in him in the past 10 years. Dr Gonzi expressed his appreciation, that of the government and the people for the service. Former Speaker Anton Tabone was appointed as acting President while President George Abela was abroad on a private visit.

21 August 2009 The Retail Price Index fell by a marginal 0.37 per cent in July mainly because of a 7.63 per cent drop in prices for clothing and footwear. The National Statistics Office said this was caused by a decrease in seasonal prices of women's clothes.

22 August 2009 Art, History, Culture, Agriculture, Music and Sport will come together in the second edition of Iljeli Mellieħin between September 10 and 13. Mellieħa Mayor Robert Cutajar said the locality would also be celebrating two significant events: the European Destination of Excellence Award and the twinning agreement signed with Agia Napa in Cyprus. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information praised the council's initiative and said that through the activity the village was exposing its character and identity.

23 August 2009 The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs opened the sailing marathon activity organised by Vikings Sailing Club to raise funds for the cloistered nuns of St Clare's Monastery, St Julians. Two teenagers Paul Portanier, 13, and Daniel Fenech, 12, took part in the 32-hour marathon. Paul and Daniel were accompanied by members of the public who paid a donation to try out dinghy sailing.

24 August 2009 Only one date of durability had to be indicated on food products intended for human consumption, said the Food Safety Commission. It said that the practice of having two dates of durability on the same product was not acceptable

24 August 2009 Spanish King Juan Carlos I would be expected to visit Malta in November,. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk would be expected to pay an official visit to Malta in October. The announcements were made by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, as he announced that the EU-Arab League liaison centre was expected to open in Malta in October.

25 August 2009 An eight month waste separation project at the Valletta Waterfront was so successful that its operators shall now be running it on a permanent basis. Catering and retail operators at the Waterfront, through the Malta Hotels & Restaurant Association (MHRA) and in collaboration with Green Dot Malta, operators of the GreenPak scheme, had been operating a system for the segregation and eventual collection of waste, including organic, for the past eight months. The best performing outlets - Agenda Book Shop, CasaNova, and Q Bar were awarded certificates of merit by The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism.

25 August 2009 Matthew Gatt was appointed as chief executive officer of the Malta Information Technology Agency. A graduate in engineering, Mr Gatt started his professional career in the manufacturing industry with a local company specialising in precision hydraulic components. After reading for an MSc in Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing at the Cranfield Institute of Technology (UK), he moved to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority In 2007 he was appointed chief operations officer and deputy CEO within MITTS/MITA.

25 August 2009 The Hon. Honio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, received a delegation from the People's Bureau of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, headed by The Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the General People's Congress, H.E. Mr Suleiman Shoumi. Dr Borg said that sharp progress had been registered in Malta-Libya issues regarding visas, fisheries and double taxation. He also said that Malta's President The Hon. George Abela, would be visiting the country for the 40th anniversary of the revolution

25 August 2009 An old patrol boat was scuttled in the area known as Tal-Matz beneath the coastal tower in Comino. Once it was safely settled beneath the water, the curious divers were allowed in to take their first look at Malta's latest diving attraction. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism said Malta had more than 20 such diving sites, nine of which were purposely scuttled vessels.

26 August 2009 The Hon President, Dr George Abela, met Qatar's Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in Doha, in Qatar. He was accompanied by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs and a business delegation including senior officials from government entities, constituted bodies and private companies. The Hon President, Dr George Abela said that the aim of the meeting had been met, as six agreements in different sectors were signed between the two countries. President Abela and Dr Borg were invited to a state dinner at the Amir's Palace. Before their arrival in Doha, President Abela visited the Tecom Investments Dubai Internet City in Dubai, where he was given information about the company and was updated on the development of Smart City in Ricasoli, Kalkara.

26 August 2009 King Juan Carlos of Spain awarded the Grand Cross of Isabel la Católica, one of Spain's highest decorations, to former Foreign Minister of Malta Michael Frendo. The award was made to highlight Dr Frendo's "contribution to the Mediterranean dialogue within the European policies and his remarkable work to enhance the political relations between Spain and Malta".

26 August 2009 Another 64 streets across the island would be resurfaced by local councils by the end of the year, said The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. He was speaking on a visit to road works being carried out in Ferdinand Von Hompesch Street, Naxxar.

27 August 2009 An agreement was signed by Qatar Airways with Lufthansa Technik for the maintenance of 25 aircraft in the next two-and-a-half years. Malta and Qatar also signed an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation. This was the 11th such agreement Malta signed this year. The President was accompanied by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and by 26 Maltese businessmen in Qatar.

27 August 2009 The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs visited the works carried in court which include several environmental initiatives. In the first year, this project is estimated to cost 38,000 euros.

28 August 2009 Over 20,400 Maltese people, or about five per cent of the population, had been shortlisted to benefit from the EU food aid scheme this year. The scheme will re-distribute to people in need throughout the EU, food that ended up being surplus through the common agricultural policy. Since joining, Malta received, on a yearly basis, large amounts of food supplies such as rice and milk powder. In Malta, the scheme is administered by the YMCA.

28 August 2009 A wide variety of courses for adults were being offered in the next scholastic year, said the Education Ministry. This year, 455 courses are being offered in Malta and 121 in Gozo. The subjects include academic ones, others relating to trade and others in the field of entertainment. Some of the courses are organised in collaboration with other organisations.

29 August 2009 It was of utmost importance that the voluntary sector worked in an organised, collective and holistic manner. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, spoke during a seminar "Support-Training-Networking - For a better Voluntary Sector" organised by the National Council for the Voluntary Sector in collaboration with the Commission for Voluntary

Organisations. The seminar was held to disseminate information about the law, registration and functions of the council, as well as the aims of the Voluntary Organisation Fund. A strategic plan for the sector was also presented.

30 August 2009 A Wine Festival was launched in Qormi in a 500-year-old building which used to be a windmill by The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, also inaugurated together with Qormi Mayor Jesmond Aquilina, a wine exhibition as part of the Qormi Wine Festival. Displayed at the exhibition are old tools, used by wine producers before the 1950s, bottles of wine and other traditional machinery, dating back to the pre-war period.

31 August 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister was presented with ProgettImpenn's report on divorce "For worse not for better". ProgettImpenn came up with its report in reply to that which had been published by the Today Public Policy Institute.

31 August 2009 The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, announced details of the national event 'Festa Tal-Bnadar' which will be held in September. The Hon. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and The Hon. Stefan Buontempo were also in attendance. The Event will consist of hoisting flags on the roofs of *Kazini*, Public Buildings and Private Residences. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information appealed to all those interested to participate.

SEPTEMBER

1 September 2009 Several restoration projects were being undertaken at the Ta' Liesse area in Valletta. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said that a major restoration project was on Victoria Gate. The project was being undertaken by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project in collaboration with the ministry's restoration unit. The restoration works extend to the church of Notre Dame de Liesse, the steps leading to St Ursula Street and St John's Street and St Barbara Bastion.

1 September 2009 Assistance from Maltese embassies abroad were contacted more than 12,500 times in the first eight months of this year, said the Foreign Ministry. The ministry said that during this period it had taken part in two commercial delegations - to Poland and Qatar. Two high level conferences for Maltese ambassadors and consuls were organised and several bilateral agreements were reached with France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Switzerland, the United States and Qatar.

1 September 2009 A former chief government medical officer, Alfred Grech, passed away aged 82. Born at Hamrun in 1926, Dr Grech was surgeon captain with the RAMC. In 1956 he was employed with the Ministry of Health and served as Medical Officer, Senior Occupational Health Officer, Principal Medical Officer, Chief Government Medical Officer and Special Advisor to the Ministry. As Medical Officer with the Department of Health, Dr Grech represented the Maltese government in several committees, including at the World Health Organisation.

2 September 2009 The number of mobile telephone subscriptions in the second quarter this year reached 405,465, said the National Statistics Office. It said that subscriptions to post-paid schemes were recorded at 74,696, while pre-paid scheme subscriptions stood at 330,769.

2 September 2009 The average temperature last month was one degree above the norm, with the highest, 35.2°C, registered on August 2. The lowest temperature, 21.1°C, was recorded on August 9. The average sea temperature was 1.5°C higher than the average and reached a maximum of 27.6°C.

3 September 2009 Draft legislation aimed at establishing a successful aircraft register in Malta was published by the Transport Ministry. The Aircraft Registration Act will regulate the registration of aircraft and mortgages. The draft can be downloaded from <https://mitc.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=340>.

3 September 2009 A €1.2 million project was inaugurated at the Emmanuel Delicata Winery in Paola by The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. The project inaugurated incorporated a grape crushing area and a fermentation hall.

3 September 2009 The Hon President George Abela accompanied by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the Libya's 40th anniversary celebrations on the invitation of Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi. The Hon President George Abela met Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in an official manner. The Hon. President George Abela and The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs also met Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani. They visited the convent of the Franciscan nuns where Maltese nuns work with orphans. Mass was said by Nuncio Tommaso Caputa, who was representing the Catholic Church in Libya. The Hon President George Abela also met Renato Martino, Libya's representative for the celebrations. The Hon President George Abela and The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Palm City to meet the Maltese workers on the project. They also met the Maltese workers at the Corinthia Bab Africa.

4 September 2009 The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism visited the restoration works at Fort Manoel on Manoel Island which was at an advanced stage. He said that the fort, which started being built in the 1720s at time of Grand Master de Vilhena, would be diversifying the tourism product, providing another location for visitors.

4 September 2009 An amnesty for people who have fallen behind in their income tax payments was announced by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment. Defaulters would be informed of the scheme in a letter which would list the amounts they owed and what they would be paying if they took up the amnesty. Applicants had until January 15 to apply. The scheme is voluntary but applicants would be required to drop any objections or claims they might have.

5 September 2009 The authorities resorted to a song to drum into children's minds the basic precautions they should take as part of an educational campaign on swine flu. The campaign, drafted by the Education Ministry, the Community Care Parliamentary Secretariat and the Health Department, would be targeting all schools. The Health Department also continued to insist on the importance of staying home if unwell, while the regular washing of hands with soap and water was considered the most efficient way of avoiding the spread of Influenza Virus A (H1N1). A leaflet on Influenza Virus A (H1N1) is available from www.doi.gov.mt and www.gov.mt.

5 September 2009 Klabb 3-16, was launched by the Foundation for Educational Services, and would be primarily intended for parents who would like to work but

cannot do so because they have to care for their children. Children will do their homework after school with the assistance of teachers and take part in several activities together with play workers. The service will be available at three centres, at the Birkirkara primary school, Fgura primary and Naxxar primary. Other schools will be included over the next few years.

6 September 2009 Local councils would start opening on Saturdays as from October, said The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information during the annual meeting of the Local Councils Association. He also said that many schemes had been designed specifically to meet the needs of councils.

7 September 2009 The owners of Tal-Massar Winery in Gozo turned their vineyards into a showcase for a group of tourists, foreign residents and others who crossed over from Malta to participate in their annual grape picking activity. This activity provided them with a unique experience, in which they directly contributed towards the production of wine which will be introduced on the market. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, visited the Massar winery and was invited to taste typical Gozitan food and the wine to be launched on the market by the Tal-Massar Winery.

7 September 2009 A total of €565,000 will be distributed among 20 localities that have particular needs, said The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. The councils whose requests were upheld were Valletta, Victoria, Cospicua, Birżebbuġa, Floriana, Fontana, Marsa, Marsascala, Mellieħa, Mqabba, Msida, Munxar, Nadur, Paola, San Ġiljan, San Lawrenz, Sliema, Xgħajra, Floriana, Żebbuġ and St Paul's Bay. The funds will be used mostly for waste collection and maintenance.

7 September 2009 Official celebrations to mark Victory Day started with the laying of a wreath at the little-known memorial to Malta's World War II civilian casualties. The wreath was laid at the Addolorata Cemetery by the chairman of the National Festivities Committee. The official commemorations continued at the foot of the Great Siege Monument in Republic Street, Valletta. The AFM band marched from City Gate to the monument and a musico-literary evening followed. The commemorative speech was delivered by Dr Stephen C. Spiteri, Superintendent of Fortifications. Wreaths were laid by the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, the Speaker, and Labour MP Joe Mizzi on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

7 September 2009 Gozitan Victor Grech celebrated his 100th birthday with Mass at his home in Ghasri. The celebration was headed by Gozo Bishop Mario Grech. The Acting President, Anton Tabone, led the congregation. Mr Grech used to work as a farmer and a stone mason. He also did voluntary work in the parish church.

8 September 2009 The Hon. President George Abela laid a wreath on the Great Siege Monument in Valletta and Archbishop Paul Cremona celebrated Pontifical Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral as part of activities to mark Victory Day.

8 September 2009 Senglea won the traditional September 8 regatta in a close contest with neighbours Cospicua and Marsa. Vittoriosa won Category B, retaining the trophy they won in the March 31 races. The regatta was held on the Grand Harbour fairway.

9 September 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited the facilities of Melita plc. He was shown around by Joseph A. Gasan, chairman, Gary Quin, director, and Stephen Wright, CEO. Prime Minister Gonzi was given a detailed explanation of Melita's core operations including its 24/7 customer call centre operation.

9 September 2009 Malta and Serbia signed a double taxation avoidance agreement at the end of talks between The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vuk Jeremic. Dr Borg looked forward to further collaboration in investment, culture and English language teaching.

10 September 2009 Malta's Ambassador on Climate Change, Michael Zammit Cutajar, received Hungary's Knight's Cross Order of Merit (Civil Division) in recognition of his contribution to international negotiations on climate change. The investiture was made in Budapest during a ceremony held in the Parliament Building at the invitation of the Speaker of the Parliament, Dr. Katalin Szili.

11 September 2009 Salt Partners, a foreign company based in Malta, officially announced their presence on the island. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, attended a press conference organised by Salt Partners. The company employs 11 people and offers a 14-hour working day due to time-zones. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said the financial services sector was an important one for Malta.

11 September 2009 The White Tower and a Pill Box dating back to the time of the British were passed on to the Mellieha Local Council. The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land was present during the devolution ceremony, together with Mellieha Mayor Robert Cutajar. The White Tower was built in 1658 and is the sixth tower of 13 built by Grandmaster Martin de Redin as a system of defence around the Maltese coast.

12 September 2009 Property prices continued to drop in the first three months of this year but were up by nearly 14 per cent when compared to the same period in 2007, which was considered by the industry as a good year. The National Statistics Office said the prices of all properties registered a decline of 2.83 per cent when compared to the corresponding period last year.

12 September 2009 The Pope would be expected to make a one-day visit to Malta in April 2010. The Curia confirmed that Dr Alberto Gasbarri, who is responsible for Papal trips, will be visiting Malta to explore the possibility of a Papal visit. The government welcomed the announcement on behalf of the people. It will be Pope Benedict's first visit to Malta and followed a formal invitation by President George Abela during his visit to the Vatican. His visit will be held to mark the 1950th anniversary of the arrival of St Paul in Malta.

13 September 2009 The Monitoring Board within the Ministry of Education is reviewing teacher professional qualifications and the criteria to establish and operate an English Language Teaching (ELT) school so as to bring these in line with modern industry trends, said The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister at a forum held to mark the 20th anniversary of the setting up of the Federation of English Language Teaching Organisations (FELTOM). He said that among other initiatives, the board will be introducing a National Accreditation Scheme to systematically audit ELT operations and provide independent quality assurance in all spheres to the comfort of the international student.

13 September 2009 Huge number of people visited the newly-restored Villa Francia in Lija and The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister greeted the visitors. The villa was inaugurated by The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister at the end of a three-year project. The villa, which dates back to the mid-18th century, was the residence of Sir Ugo Mifsud when he was Prime Minister between 1924 and 1927. Now government-owned, Villa Francia will be used for official functions or to host foreign delegations.

13 September 2009 Hundreds of people enjoyed the Qormi bread festival. The activity was formally opened by The Hon. President George Abela. Its purpose was to highlight Qormi's credentials as the 'bread capital' of Malta and to encourage more young people to become bakers. The activity included exhibitions and entertainment. Visitors could tour various bakeries which were open for the occasion and sample bread and other traditional food.

14 September 2009 The Cabinet approved the nomination of Magistrate Michael Mallia to become a judge and the nomination of Dr Claire Stafrace Zammit and Dr Gabriella Vella to become magistrates. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs congratulated them on their nomination.

14 September 2009 All state schools will open as planned on September 28 but various measures will be taken to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus (swine flu), said The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care. They stressed that all those having flu symptoms should stay at home and not go to school. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said an information campaign would be addressed at school children and would be conducted by the Health and Safety Unit within the Directorate of Educational Services. The emphasis would be on the frequent washing of hands and other recommendations issued by the Community Care Department.

14 September 2009 The concert Rockestra, was held up and it was a fusion of rock and classical music featuring a number of popular local performers in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund. The event was held under the patronage of The Hon. President George Abela and Mrs Abela.

15 September 2009 The residents of San Lawrenz were committed to turning their village into an ecological hub as more than three fourths of the houses there are equipped with solar water heaters. The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited the village of San Lawrenz, Gozo and praised the villagers achievement. The local council also put up a welcome sign at the entrance to the village saying: San Lawrenz, The Village That Thinks And Acts Ecologically, Welcomes You.

15 September 2009 A Quest For Knighthood will introduce Caravaggio's works to children of all ages. The book, a copy of which was presented to The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, was written by Fr Peter Serracino Inglott and Arja Nukarinen Callus. The book will be available in all school libraries in Malta.

15 September 2009 This year's edition of Notte Bianca will see 170 events held in 80 venues across Valletta on the night of October 3. The events will broadly follow the pattern established in the three editions. There will be dancing, music and drama in all the main squares and all museums will remain open late into the night, without charge. All of Valletta will feature festa decorations and churches and chapels will be open for religious activities, exhibitions and concerts. Also open will be the Palace and all ministries.

15 September 2009 Banif Bank opened a new branch in Naxxar and it was inaugurated by The Hon. President George Abela. The Hon. President George Abela congratulated the bank for its contribution to the economy and its corporate social responsibility. Those present included Banif Bank Malta President Joseph Sammut and Naxxar Mayor Maria Deguara.

16 September 2009 Deputy Speaker, The Hon. Carmelo Abela, chaired The National Youth Parliament and the activity was organised by the National Council for Youths. Those present included Education Minister Dolores Cristina, Parliamentary Secretary Clyde Puli, shadow education minister Evarist Bartolo and shadow youth affairs minister Owen Bonnici.

17 September 2009 A €100,000 flood relief project in Pembroke will be soon completed in the coming weeks said the Resources Ministry. It said culverts have been built in the lower areas of Pembroke to channel rainwater which flows from Madliena and Ibrag. The water will flow to a gallery underneath Mediterranean Street. The ministry thanked residents of the streets involved for their cooperation

17 September 2009 The Resources Ministry will hold a concert to mark the fifth anniversary of the launching of the 34U Campaign. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said that this had been a very successful scheme which had seen more than 70,000 trees planted across Malta and Gozo. A further 20,000 are set to be planted later this year. The concert will be held at the Manoel Theatre and it will be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

18 September 2009 Palumbo S.p.A., a shipyard based in Naples, was selected as the preferred bidder for the Malta Shipyards ship repair facilities in Cospicua, announced the government. It said the Privatisation Unit has advised Palumbo S.p.A. accordingly and will proceed to open negotiations with this bidder.

19 September 2009 Malta's diving community and local residents of St Paul's Bay were called upon to celebrate International Cleanup Day. This activity is an eco-community campaign to clean up marine debris and was held in collaboration with New Dimensions Scuba diving, as part of a seabed clean up in the Sirens area. The activity was also part of the Local Council's Cleaning Campaign in St Paul's Bay and was held in the presence of the The Hon Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information. Dr Said praised the efforts of the team of volunteers dedicated to underwater environment and the safeguarding of shores. Chris Said emphasised the importance of cleanliness in localities, both on land, as well as underwater, in those localities surrounded by the sea.

21 September 2009 Official Independence Day celebrations were held with Pontifical Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral followed by the laying of flowers at the Independence Monument by The Hon President George Abela and The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. The ceremony included a parade by the Armed Forces of Malta and the firing of a salute.

21 September 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, accompanied by The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Nationalist MP Franco Debono left for New York, where he will address the General Assembly of the United Nations. The delegation later would travel to San Francisco for meetings with the Maltese community and a visit to Maltese investments.

21 September 2009 Students will be returning to a nicer environment in 60 state schools after €1.6 million was spent on refurbishing and upgrading them over the summer. The Education Ministry said the work carried out included an overhaul of the electricity system at the girls' secondary in Ħamrun, formerly known as Maria Assumpta. A new library and science laboratory at the boys' secondary school in Ħamrun, formerly known as the Ħamrun Lyceum, was also built, while the apertures at the Pembroke secondary school were changed. The Gżira primary school, which forms part of St Clare's College, was given a total revamp with new floor tiles, doors,

electrical wiring and whitewashing. A lift was installed at the primary school in Żabbar to make it accessible to the disabled.

22 September 2009 The introduction of flexible bi-directional lanes on arterial roads to reduce traffic congestion during peak hours were among the proposals made in a National strategy for policy abatement measures relating to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Resources Minister George Pullicino said the publication of the document followed an extensive consultation process. He explained that by 2018 the government would have to invest some €800 million in the energy supply infrastructure as part of its mitigation measures for CO₂.

23 September 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care toured Malta's first night shelter for the elderly which will open in the coming months as a pilot project. The shelter will be housed at Jesus of Nazareth Convent in Zejtun and will be run by the nuns with government financial assistance. The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care, said the secretariat had spent almost €93,000 to prepare the facilities, which include a dining room, sitting room, bedrooms and a lift.

23 September 2009 The World Health Organisation will be holding its European Regional committee meeting in Malta in 2012, after the government's request was accepted by the region's 53 member states. This was the first time that Malta made a request to host the Annual Meeting. The Regional Committee brings together the 53 European countries to discuss health issues and policies to be adopted in the region's health sector.

24 September 2009 The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, inaugurated the HSBC Premiere Valletta Boat Show, in the area around Dock 1 in Cospicua. More than 70 yachts were on display in the sea and on the wharf along with a wide range of yacht services. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, praised the decision to locate the show around Dock 1, saying it gave the people the opportunity to visit a place they rarely ever saw.

24 September 2009 Valletta, Paceville and Marsalforn were selected to form part of a pilot project that revolved around the tourism management of the towns' centres. Residents, businesses, local councils and other stakeholders will pool in their efforts and work together to ensure that the locality is managed efficiently and resources are maximised. The Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Mario de Marco, said that the process of identifying these stakeholders would start and once selected the stakeholders will attend workshops to help them better understand how tourism zone management works. This pilot project was an initiative of The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, with the collaboration of the local councils, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants' Association and the Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises - GRTU.

24 September 2009 The Hon. President George Abela visited the Mater Dei Hospital's Rainbow Ward. He said that treating young cancer patients was an investment in the future and pledged that the Malta Community Chest Fund would continue working to help them. He thanked the Puttinu Cares Children Cancer Support Group, which has over the years helped patients and their families, even raising money to buy apartments in London where they could stay while receiving treatment.

25 September 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister officially inaugurated an EC language school in New York - the third school in the USA to be acquired by the Maltese group of English language schools. The school opened in early 2009. Dr Gonzi was greeted by Andrew Mangion, EC's Executive Chairman, who spoke on the EC success and Dr Gonzi congratulated EC for its international expansion.

25 September 2009 Malta and Slovakia signed a memorandum of understanding setting the framework within which authorities from the two countries will identify, screen and facilitate the process of adoption of Slovak children by couples in Malta. The memorandum of understanding was signed by The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy and Slovak Social Affairs Minister Viera Tomanova in Slovakia. Both ministers emphasised that the priority would be the welfare of the children, who would be assisted to integrate into their adoptive Maltese families whilst retaining ties with Slovakia, their country of birth.

25 September 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister urged the United Nations to review the Law of the Sea Convention, 15 years after it came into force, whilst addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. Dr Gonzi, also referred to the forthcoming Copenhagen summit on climate change and said it must signal a turning point. Dr Gonzi also spoke on the conflict in the Middle East and renewed Malta's call on both parties to fully engage in resumed peace negotiations.

26 September 2009 The Community Chest Fund announced the holding of The President's Charity Run, as another new fund-raising event. Mrs Margaret Abela, chairman of the Fund, said the run was another initiative following the successful holding of Rockestra. The charity run will be held on December 6 and participants will run from San Anton Palace to the Palace in Valletta. It will be open to everyone. An application form is to be posted on www.l-istrina.org and application forms will also be available from Banif branches, the association and the Health Department.

27 September 2009 Zejtun marked the start of the traditional olive-picking season with Zejt iz-Zejtun, a weekend of cultural activities focused on the pressing of olives. Organised by the Local Council and supported by the The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, the MTA and the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, the festival included exhibitions of traditional crafts and free tasting of bread dipped in fresh olive oil.

27 September 2009 A group of 180 farmers committed themselves to a total investment of €27 million in agriculture infrastructural projects, and will be given EU assistance for half the amount. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, who met the farmers, congratulated them for the confidence they were showing in the agriculture sector.

28 September 2009 The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said in a statement to mark the opening of the scholastic year, that many schoolchildren were returning to a school environment that was better than last year's, due to renovation works that had been carried out in more than half of state schools. She also said that her ministry would continue to roll out major reforms, notably in the transition of schoolchildren from primary to secondary school. The minister thanked all those in the teaching grades for their work, as well as those in administration, and the workers involved in the renovation of the schools.

28 September 2009 The national breast screening programme will soon be launched with the initial screening focussed on women aged between 50 and 59, said the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Joe Cassar, during a press conference by the Action for Breast Cancer Foundation to mark world breast cancer day. About 30,000

women aged between 50 and 59 will be called for screening over a period of three years. Dr Cassar said this age group constituted the highest risk sector.

29 September 2009 The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs visited the works of the paving of St George's Square, accompanied by Artistic Director Carlo Schembri and Valletta Rehabilitation Project Architect Claude Borg. He said that most of the paving was now ready and water jets for the ground fountain were taking shape. The works on St Georges Square were being complemented by restoration works on the palace with the works on the front and the side having already started, while those on the back were expected to start soon.

29 September 2009 The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport visited Pembroke Primary School, Erin Serracino Inglott Primary school for girls in Cospicua and San Ġorġ Primary for boys in Qormi. They met heads, teachers and students. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport encouraged students, teachers and parents to work together to ensure a successful educational system. She said also, that the government would officially launch the reform that aimed to do away with the streaming system and is expected to be implemented in 2011.

30 September 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited San Francisco at the invitation of the Maltese-American Social Club, which was celebrating its 80th anniversary. He toured local businesses owned by Maltese-Americans. The Prime Minister also attended a memorial service for Patrolman David Chetcuti, a Millbrae police officer and Maltese-American killed in the line of duty in 1998.

30 September 2009 Anthony Rizzo was appointed chief executive of the Malta Resources Authority. He takes over from Antoine Riolo who is retiring. An engineer by profession, Mr Rizzo has worked with Air Malta and in the private sector and served as chief executive officer of the Water Services Corporation and Enemalta.

OCTOBER

1 October 2009 Malta registered a small drop in the jobless rate in August compared to July, according to Eurostat figures published today, one of only a few countries to do so. The EU 27 unemployment rate in August was 9.1% compared to 9.0% in July and 7.0% in August last year. The lowest unemployment was in the Netherlands (3.2%) and Austria (4.7%) while Spain and Latvia were at the other end of the scale on 18.9% and 18.3% respectively. Malta was on 7.2% from 7.3% in July and 6.0% in July last year. The figures show that all member states recorded an increase in unemployment over the year.

1 October 2009 A total of 77.4 mm of rain fell last month at Luqa Airport, which was more than the September climatological norm of 40.4 mm. The wettest day was September 23rd with a total of 56.2 mm, the MIA Met Office said. The wettest September on record was that of 1997 with 266.9 mm and the driest one was that of 1943 with no rain at all.

1 October 2009 The Cabinet is considering a proposal to extend Addolorata Cemetery by a further 9,000 new graves, Social Policy Minister John Dalli has told Parliament. The project would be completed in two years, but the new graves would be offered as soon as they became available, he said. Figures given by the minister

show there are 6,530 applications for private graves in Government cemeteries, of which 4,029 are for graves at the Addolorata. There are 20,517 private graves in government cemeteries, of which 14,329 are at the Addolorata. There are also 1,776 'common' graves.

2 October 2009 An agreement for the provision of a maritime patrol aircraft for the Armed Forces of Malta has been signed between Aerodata and the AFM. The new aircraft, co-funded by the 2009 External Borders Fund (EBF), would be operated by the AFM and would have a major role in the protection of the EU's southern border. Aerodata, the chosen company, was recently approved as the service center for all KingAir models by Hawker Beechcraft, enabling it to provide warranty and maintenance work on all aircraft and mission systems. It would also provide training for pilots, aircraft mechanics and mission systems operators.

3 October 2009 Notte Bianca in Valletta took place in Valletta. Activities included music, dance and drama in all the main squares. Museums stayed open late into the night and entrance was free. A record number of 7,500 visited St. John's Co-Cathedral. Churches and chapels stayed open for religious activities, exhibitions and concerts. The Palace and all ministries were also open. The Museum of Fine Arts featured several rare exhibits, including proposals made in 1914 by Antonio Sciortino for a Monument to the Unknown Soldier. Rare film footage of Malta at war and other highlights of the island's history, forming part of the archives of the Department of Information was screened at the Aula Magna of the Old University Building in St Paul Street.

3 October 2009 The Malta Information Technology Agency (Mita) has entered into a five-year agreement with Dakar Software Systems for the implementation and support of a new enterprise payroll solution within the public service. This would enable the government to meet new business requirements and improve the overall human resources management process. The government's total investment would be in the region of €2.3 million over five years. The new technology would provide flexibility and enable decentralisation of online operations within ministries and departments more effectively. For the first time the Payroll solution would provide e-Government services to the employees enabling them to directly access their personal information remotely. They would be able to request vacation leave or report sick leave from work or home through appropriate security features.

4 October 2009 An open day was held by the Armed Forces of Malta at the Valletta Waterfront. There were stalls representing each army unit and visitors could see the equipment used by the AFM, including firearms, which they could also hold. One had the opportunity to go up on the patrol boats. The day also included rescue, air defence, drill and armed combat displays.

4 October 2009 Crime reports have dropped by 25 percent between 2005 and 2008, the Home Affairs Ministry said. It said in a statement that the number of criminal reports were reduced by 4,658 in the period with the number dropping from 18,461 in 2004 to 13,803 last year.

5 October 2009 The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs greeted Luxembourg Minister of Home Affairs, Jean-Marie Halsdorf, who arrived in Malta for talks on illegal immigration and law enforcement. Luxembourg is one of the participating countries in the Frontex mission Nautilus IV, currently based in Malta. It is also one of six EU member states that have so far committed to participate in the European Commission's pilot project to resettle immigrants who were granted protection by Malta.

6 October 2009 While speaking at the opening of a conference on Strengthening Marriage and Family, organised by the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, H.E. The President George Abela has called on the country to take stock of the current situation regarding the family and to take decisions regarding family law. Dr Abela raised various issues which need to be discussed, including the definition of the family, the rights of cohabiting families, assistance to families and the issue of breakdowns and divorce.

7 October 2009 A new website of the Maltese judiciary featuring a wealth of information on the law courts was inaugurated this morning by Chief Justice Vincent deGaetano, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications and The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. <http://judiciarymalta.gov.mt>

7 October 2009 There were 9,422 failures out of 17,547 driving tests taken last year and in the first six months of 2009, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said while answering a parliamentary question. The minister also said in reply to another question that in the first six months of 2009 there were 74,269 vehicles tested for roadworthiness (VRT). Of these, 6,261 failed the test.

8 October 2009 On a visit to Playmobil (Brandstätter Group) factory in Hal Far, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment announced that Brandstätter Group is to invest €11 million on an extension of its Malta plant and the introduction of new technology. Brandstätter has had a presence in Malta for 38 years. Mr Fenech said Malta was an attractive investment destination because of the skills of its workers, and this investment was a good signal for the future.

9 October 2009 Gharb local council has been granted €570,000 under EU cohesion funds to rehabilitate and improve accessibility to Wied Il-Mielah in Gozo. Mayor David Apap told The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information during a tour of the valley that the council will continue with the rehabilitation of the area and will install solar-powered security cameras to deter vandalism. It will also continue the rebuilding of field walls and bridges, resurface the roads and also improve access to the sea since this could be a popular diving site. The idea, he said, was for the area to also become popular for country walks, thus improving the tourism product.

10 October 2009 The Malta Transport Authority said that €4 million are being spent this year on road repairs, with the roads being prioritised according to their condition. So far this year, works have been carried out on 44 arterial, distributory and link roads.

13 October 2009 The Gozo Ministry said the first phase of the Cittadella masterplan project has been concluded. The information gathered over the past year includes details on military architecture, archaeology, flora and fauna, land use, traffic, tourism, and site management. The masterplan is co-financed by the European Economic Area. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo said it would be proposing measures of how to preserve the site, making the best use of its potential. The Cittadella, she said, was also benefitting from another project co-financed by the European Union. This will be restoring and consolidating its walls.

14 October 2009 French Immigration Minister Eric Besson has reaffirmed his country's commitment to help Malta with the relocation of refugees granted international protection in Malta during a meeting in Paris with The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs.

14 October 2009 A total of 77.4 mm of rain fell last month at Luqa Airport, well over the September climatological norm of 40.4 mm. The Meteorological Office said that highest amount of rainfall was registered on the 23rd with a total of 56.2 mm. But the wettest September on record was that of 1997 when 266.9 mm of rain fell and the driest that of 1943 when there had been no rain at all. Thunderstorms were noted on the 10th, 24th and 25th. The stormiest September in 1955 followed by that of 2003. With a mean air temperature of 24.6 degrees Celcius, September days were half a degree warmer than the norm for September. The lowest minimum temperature last month was 17.5 degrees Celcius, recorded on the 24th - 4.3 degrees higher than the minimum for the past 61 years. Records at the Meteorological Office show that the coolest September night was on the 21st in 1969, when the minimum reading was 13.2 degrees. The highest maximum temperature of 32.4 degrees, recorded on September 5, was five degrees lower than the maximum for the past 61 years. The hottest September days on record were the 9th and 10th of 1924, when a maximum temperature of 38.9°C was reached.

14 October 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, the EU's External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner and the Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa inaugurated the Euro-Arab liaison office, aimed at facilitating dialogue between the European Commission and the Arab league. The office, which will have an initial injection of €500,000 from EU coffers, will be coordinated by officials from the European Commission, the Arab League and Malta.

16 October 2009 The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications announced fares for a reformed and improved bus service.

17 October 2009 The third edition of Casal Fornaro Festival took place. Activities included the terramaxka, folk singing, local bands and a showcase of crafts and traditions. A World War II shelter beneath the police station which has been restored by the Qormi police in their free time was open to visitors.

18 October 2009 The President of Malta, H.E. Dr George Abela and Mrs Abela celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar at San Anton Palace. The chapel at the Palace is dedicated to Our Lady of the Pillar. A small statue of the Madonna on a marble pillar was found at the Church dedicated to Our Lady of the Pillar in Valletta. The statue, which is the responsibility of Heritage Mata was brought to the San Anton chapel and was decorated and exposed for the occasion throughout this week.

19 October 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy inaugurated the refurbished Dual Diagnosis Unit at Mount Carmel Hospital. Last year, more than 2,000 patients were admitted to Mount Carmel Hospital while more than 1,000 outpatient cases visited Mater Dei.

20 October 2009 The government has appointed AngelouEconomics, a Texan consulting company to advise it on Vision 2015 and its attractiveness for foreign investment. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said the company was one of the best known in its area of operation in Texas. Over the past 12 years it had helped identify and highlight the factors which made Texas an attractive investment destination.

20 October 2009 The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy, together with the Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, and the Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land, officially opened the National Centre for Breast screening at Lascaris Wharf. The centre will test some 14,000 women a year free of charge.

21 October 2009 The number of licensed motor vehicles rose by 337 in the third quarter this year, to stand at 299,811 at the end of September, the National Statistics Office said. 76 percent were private vehicles and 16 percent commercial. The number of new licences issued during the third quarter of 2009 amounted to 5,075. Private vehicles accounted for 4,089 new licences, or 80.6 percent of the total. The majority of new licences were issued to private vehicles falling within 'Class 1' (<1300 cc). This class accounted for 1,835 new licences, while vehicles in 'Class 2' (1301-1449 cc) accounted for 514. Newly licensed 'new' motor vehicles amounted to 1,769, or 34.9 percent of the total, while newly licensed 'used' motor vehicles amounted to 3,306. In the third quarter 22 vehicles were exported. Scrapped vehicles numbered 1,041 of which 57.3 percent were 'Class 1' vehicles (<1300 cc). Garaged vehicles (vehicles no longer licensed for use on the road) amounted to 2,739, or 72 percent of the total vehicles which were no longer on the road in the period under review.

21 October 2009 The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs said Malta has offered to help Bulgaria prepare for the adoption of the euro. The two countries have been holding talks during a state visit to Malta by Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov. Dr Borg said in a meeting with Bulgarian officials that Malta had backed and assisted Bulgaria join the EU and looked forward to further political and commercial cooperation. A cooperation agreement which will govern the growth of relations was signed at the Foreign Ministry.

21 October 2009 The L-Istrina piggy bank campaign was launched by the chairman of the Community Chest Fund, Mrs Margaret Abela at Maria Assumpta school in Hamrun. The campaign, sponsored by Bank of Valletta, encourages students to donate some of their pocket money to people in need. L-Istrina will be held on December 26 in a hangar of Lufthansa Technik. A total of 5,000 piggy banks have been distributed in 204 schools in Malta and Gozo. Just over €250,000 were collected through the BOV Piggy Bank Campaigns in the past five years.

22 October 2009 . The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said a total of 1,475 migrants arrived illegally between January and September this year, while the number of repatriations during the same period reached 319. Repatriations totalled 260 in the whole of last year and 338 in 2007 said this year's arrivals included 898 Somalis, by far the biggest group. They were followed by 156 from Eritrea. The minister also said that in the past five years, 89 migrants who had arrived in Malta illegally were subsequently found in other countries of the European Union. Sixteen were sent back to Malta.

23 October 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy announced the name of the winner of this year's Elderly of the Year Award. The winner, 74-year-old Maria Zammit Gallo daily visits the residents at the Marina Home and caters to their needs. She gives Holy Communion to the bedridden, sleeps with them when they are sick and accompanies them to hospital and gets them the medicine they require. She also feeds those who cannot eat on their own.

23 October 2009 An electric boat was launched by The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. The boat has been designed, built and commissioned for trips around Malta and Gozo by the Department of Industrial Electrical Power Conversion at the University of Malta. The boat is equipped with the latest state of the art technology.

23 October 2009. The 12-month moving average rate of inflation last month stood at 3.46 percent, whereas the annual rate stood at 1.18 percent, the National Statistics

Office said. The NSO said the retail price index went up to 118.22 in September from 117.69 in August.

23 October 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited the new General Soft Drinks bottling facility in Marsa, built with an investment of €27 million. The building incorporates energy saving measures through the use of natural light, building insulation and waste water minimisation processes. The company employs 260 employees, all of whom were trained following the move from the Qormi plant to Marsa. Dr Gonzi described the company as one of Malta's success stories.

24 October 2009 As part of events to mark the European Day of Civil Justice, the law courts building was open for viewing. Visitors could tour the halls at the law courts building in Republic Street and visit exhibitions about the history of the law courts in Malta. Exhibits included historic documents on important cases, pictures of buildings which housed the law courts over the years, designs for a new law courts building, gowns, decorations and other items belonging to Malta's Chief Justices.

26 October 2009 There are almost 300,000 licensed vehicles on the road, according to figures released by the National Statistics Office. The number of vehicles has risen steadily over the past two years, from 280,242 in the first quarter of 2007 to 299,811 at the end of last month. According to the NSO, 76 per cent of the cars are private vehicles while 16 per cent are commercial ones. More than 5,000 new licences were issued between July and September, 80 per cent of which were for private vehicles. The majority of licences were for cars under 1300cc. Just under two-thirds of the vehicles licensed in the third quarter of 2009 were used cars. The NSO said 22 vehicles were exported in the third quarter of this year, while 1,041 cars were scrapped. There were 2,739 garaged cars.

27 October 2009 6,912 persons did not have their driving licence renewed immediately this year because they had not settled pending fines, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications has told parliament. Meanwhile, between January and September the police issued 47,872 fines for traffic violations, The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in reply to a parliamentary question.

27 October 2009 The number of traffic accidents decreased in the third quarter of this year when compared to the same period last year, but there were nine fatalities, the NSO said this morning. The number of reported traffic accidents reached 3,419, a decrease of 379 cases over the corresponding quarter last year. Drops were recorded in all districts, the highest percentage decrease occurring in the South Eastern district (18.9 per cent). The Northern Harbour district registered the most accidents: 1,257 cases, or 36.8 per cent of the total.

28 October 2009 The European Union announced Joanna Drake as Director of the Directorate General for Enterprise. She will be Director for the Promotion of Competitiveness of SMEs. Dr Drake, who has been the Commission's representative to Malta for the past years, is the first Maltese to be appointed to the highest echelons of the European Commission in Brussels.

28 October 2009 The number of tourists visiting Malta in September numbered 130,296, down by 6.8 percent when compared to the corresponding month in 2008. Tourstat data issued by the National Statistics Office shows that during the same period total nights spent were recorded at 1,138,763. The majority, or 112,007, of tourists visited Malta for holiday purposes while 10,357 were in Malta for business. A decrease of 10.8 percent was recorded in the number of first-time visitors, while repeat tourists

remained comparatively stable when compared to 2008. Furthermore 89.1 percent of tourists visiting Malta came from EU member states, while air transport remained the most popular means of reaching Malta, with an estimated 99.2 percent. During the same period, guest nights in collective accommodation recorded a drop of 13.3 percent, while total nights in private accommodation remained practically unchanged. Overall, the average length of stay was calculated at 8.7 nights, down by 0.2 nights when compared to September last year. Tourist arrivals since January were estimated at 936,342, a decrease of 10.4 percent over the corresponding period in 2008. This change is mostly attributable to a decrease in holiday visits, primarily from the British, German and Scandinavian markets. Overall the majority of tourists visiting Malta remain for a period of at least seven nights. Total nights spent during the reference period decreased by 10.3 percent when compared to the corresponding period in 2008. Survey results indicated that per capita total expenditure was estimated at €812, down by 2.4 percent when compared to last year.

29 October 2009 The volume and wholesale value of fish landings advanced by 73.1 and 32.1 per cent respectively in the third quarter of this year compared to the same period last year, the NSO said today. It said fish landings amounted to 526,670 kilograms, up by 73.1 per cent over the third quarter last year. This resulted from more landings in most of the species, mainly Swordfish (+24.6 per cent) and Dorado (+20.4 per cent). A spike in Mackerel landings by Gozitan fishermen was also a contributing factor. The wholesale value of fresh fish landings rose by 32.1 per cent, from €1,671,174 in the third quarter of 2008 to €2,207,661 in the corresponding period this year. In the third quarter of 2009, foreign-flagged vessels landed a total of 4,872 kilograms of fish, 87.4 per cent more over the comparative period in 2008 - 0.9 percent of the total catch, while their wholesale value more than doubled, from €12,567 in 2008 to €29,302 in 2009.

31 October 2009 250 volunteers and 42 organisations have teamed up with GreenPak to make the fourth annual seabed clean up of eight locations in Malta and Gozo. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister visited the volunteers at Xlendi and Marsalforn.

NOVEMBER

1 November 2009 The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, launched the newly set up wind monitoring mast at I-Ahrax tal-Mellieha.

2 November 2009 October was 0.5 °C cooler than the average as well as drier, the Met Office at Malta International Airport said. The average temperature last month was 20.2 °C. The mean maximum temperature last month was 23.4 °C, which was 0.8 °C lower than the mean maximum norm. This trend was similar to October of last year. The warmest days last month were October 1 and 7 with a maximum temperature of 26.6 °C. The lowest temperature was 11.8 °C on October 20th.

2 November 2009 The Hon Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, arrived in Spain for talks with Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero.

3 November 2009 The number of accidents at the place of work declined by 16.9 % between July and September compared to the same quarter last year, official figures show. The NSO said there were 873 non-fatal accidents during the period. There was also one fatality - the same as last year. Just over a quarter of the accidents took place in the manufacturing sector, followed by 15.2 % in construction and 14 % in

transport, storage and communication. 397 cases (45.5 %) involved people in elementary occupations, while 179 cases (20.5 %) affected people in craft/trades work. In the period under review, 46.5 % of accidents at work occurred to persons who were under 35 years of age. Injuries were mostly caused to the upper extremities of the body, notably hands and fingers.

4 November 2009 Over €200,000 were donated to charitable organisations by the government to change the quality of life of hundreds living in Africa and South America. The Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced that a total of €330,000 were made available, of which €237,200 were yesterday handed out to nine charities out of 34 applicants to fund projects.

5 November 2009 Dredging of the seawater canal at Salina has been completed, enabling the water to circulate around the salt pans and removing the stench of stagnant water, the Resources Ministry said. The clean-up was part of a €250,000 project which also included the rehabilitation of a 90-metre long wall, built by the Knights, which had been damaged by bad weather. The 835-metre long canal, which has a depth of 1.5 metres had been almost totally blocked by debris - the ministry workers removed some 10,000 tons of material.

5 November 2009 A total of 7,521 persons were registered as unemployed in September, an increase of 1,425 persons when compared to the same month last year, the NSO said today. The figure was down from 7,743 in August. The NSO said there were 6,751 persons without a job in Malta and 770 in Gozo. In the 12 months to September 2009, the persons registering for work in Malta increased by 1,350 (25 %), whilst those registering for work in Gozo went up by 75 (11 %).

6 November 2009 Malta International Airport registered a 0.1 % increase in passenger movements in October but the first 10 months of the year resulted in an average decrease of 7.3 % when compared to the corresponding period last year. The total passenger movements on scheduled and non-scheduled flights in October was of 280,364 an increase of 173 passengers when compared to October last year. The aircraft movements and cargo and mail figures registered an increase of 5.2 % and 12.3 %, respectively. Passenger traffic for Malta's main markets – the UK, Italy and Spain increased by 0.2 %, 19.6 % and 31.6 %, respectively. Decreases were registered from Germany (-7.1 %) and France (-1.6 %). The busiest day in October was the 13th in terms of passengers with 11,680 movements and the 11th in terms of aircraft (96).

6 November 2009 The visible trade gap improved by €79.7 million in September when compared to the same month last year, according to preliminary figures released by the National Office of Statistics. The NSO said that the visible trade gap in September stood at €54.5 million. There was a drop in imports of €119 million and a decrease in exports of €39.3 million.

8 November 2009 Remembrance Sunday commemorations took place in Valletta. The President and the Prime Minister led the congregation at Pontifical Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, followed by wreath-laying at the Cenotaph in Floriana.

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

10 November 2009 A total of 867 students in government schools are exempt from religion classes, The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

said in Parliament. The highest number are 101 at St Paul's Bay primary, followed by 22 at Marsascala primary and 18 at Birzebbuga primary school.

10 November 2009 Jin Choi, the executive director of strategy and business development for SmartCity, has been appointed head of SmartCity Malta. Mr Jin holds a masters in business administration from IMD, Switzerland and was previously employed at multinationals such as Morgan Stanley, Schindler and OC Oerlikon (former Unaxis).

10 November 2009 A total of 7,130 foreigners were granted a permit to work in Malta between January and August this year, The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said in a reply to a parliamentary question.

11 November 2009 There were 186 Maltese persons who married foreigners to date in 2009, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said in a reply to a parliamentary question. These were 79 men and 107 women.

11 November 2009 A total of 33,761 Maltese went abroad in September, an increase of 10.9 % compared to the same month last year. 87.3 % travelled by air. The National Statistics Office said that 87.6 % travelled to EU destinations, the most popular being Italy and the UK (32 and 23.4 %), respectively. Nearly half of these outbound passengers fell in the 25-44 age bracket. Between January and September, the number of outbound passengers reached 229,664, almost unchanged from last year's figures. Of these 198,740 travelled to EU destinations, mainly Italy and the UK, which together accounted for 64.6 % of the total EU trips. The number of non-EU trips dropped by 5.7 %.

12 November 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited the Institute of Cellular Pharmacology (ICP) at Mosta Technopark. The ICP was set up in 1998 by Charles Saliba, an applied biologist, and Gilles Gutierrez, a pharmacologist. The company carries out research and development using prickly pear, pomegranate and padina pavonica (an algae found in the Mediterranean). It has developed products applied in the international veterinary, cosmetic and nutraceutical (food with biological activity) fields, and patented over 40 of its discoveries over the past decade.

12 November 2009 Almost all enterprises employing at least 10 full-time equivalent employees had at their disposal both a computer and internet access, the National Statistics Office said. It said that according to an annual survey on information communication technology, carried out during the first quarter of this year, 96 and 65 % of 10+ enterprises and micro-enterprises, respectively, made use of a computer during the period under review.

13 November 2009 Speaking at the Mosta Health Centre, The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the Ministry for Social Policy, said around 10 % of the local population suffers from diabetes, with six % taking some form of medication for their condition. He said only four % were controlling their condition through a diet. Health centres and peripheral health clinics took part in the testing drive.

16 November 2009 The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices and Inflation went down last month when compared to September, NSO figures show. The HICP went down to 111.46 in October from 111.88 in September.

16 November 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, launched support group Amputees 4 Amputees, set up by Amy Zahra. The group will offer support to patients

before and after an amputation as well as lobby for changes that would improve the quality of life of amputees.

18 November 2009 Cruise passenger traffic decreased by 16,114 during October 2009 when compared to the same month of 2008, the National Statistics Office said. The total cruise passenger traffic in October 2009 stood at 56,607. There were 43 cruise liner calls in October 2009 compared to the 55 calls in October 2008. Comparing figures by gender, during the month under review there was an increase in passengers aged 19 years and under of over 1,500 when compared to October 2008. The other age groups registered a decrease with the highest drop recorded in those aged 60 to 79 of 9,089. Traffic already decreased by 26 % since the start of the year when compared to the first 10 months of 2008.

18 November 2009 Between 2002 and 2008 there were a total of 147 suicides in Malta and Gozo, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in a reply to a parliamentary question. There were 19 in 2002, 20 in 2003, 24 in 2004, 18 in 2005, 26 in 2006, 26 in 2007 and 14 in 2008. In the same period there were 11 cases of poisoning due to the ingestion of harmful substances in 2002, six in 2003, six in 2004, nine in 2005, nine in 2006, 12 in 2007 and eight in 2008. These suicide cases and accidental deaths were classified under the International Classification of Diseases.

19 November 2009 Malta has placed first in an EU benchmarking exercise of e-government services. The survey ranked services according to a number of criteria in an exercise carried out every two years. Malta was second in the last survey. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, said the results were particularly welcome as the concept of e-government was only launched nine years ago. The Maltese e-government portal registered some four million transactions a month and the payment gateway handles around €40m per year. The report, commissioned by the European Commission, assessed countries on the basis of online availability of public services, sophistication, user experience, availability of e-procurement and pro-activity.

19 November 2009 A mechanical treatment plant has been installed at Sant'Antnin waste facility for the recycling of up to 35,000 tons of municipal waste per year. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, said the new plant would separate waste and process it for recycling. He said that as more waste was taken for recycling at Sant' Antnin, dumping in landfills would be consigned to history and waste would be reused as compost or converted to energy.

20 November 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited PricewaterhouseCoopers and announced the expansion of the company. This brought the company's staff complement to more than 300.

20 November 2009 The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, visited Stainless Steel Products Limited. The company is investing €350,000 in new technology and tooling, creating 30 new jobs.

20 November 2009 Almost half of the employed population in Gozo works in the public sector, compared to a third in Malta, according to European study published by the National Statistics Office.

With regard to unemployment, last year Gozo's rate was higher than Malta's (30.7 and 24.6 respectively) per 1,000 population. The ratio of self-employed persons is higher in Gozo, with 56.9 per 1,000 population compared to Malta's 51.5.

21 November 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited Progress Press. The company announced an investment of €26 million in new premises and equipment. Progress Press is engaged in the printing of a range of products including newspapers, magazines, manuals and books (hardback and paperback) with exports to EU countries, the United States and Africa.

23 November 2009 Unemployment climbed by 982 last month when compared to the same month in 2008 and reached 7,333, the NSO said. This included 6,573 persons in Malta and 760 in Gozo. In the twelve months to October 2009, the persons registering for work in Malta increased by 910 (16.1 %), whilst those registering for work in Gozo went up by 72 (10.5 %).

23 November 2009 The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy, was confirmed by the Cabinet to be nominated to serve as European Commissioner.

24 November 2009 The Retail Price Index in October went up to 119.12 from 118.22 in September 2009 (0.76 %) the NSO said.

24 November 2009 The number of women returning back to work registered a five % growth in the five years to 2008, but Malta still ranks last in the EU when it comes to female employment levels. The %age of working Maltese women aged 15-64 rose to 37.4 % last year, an increase of almost two % on the previous year and up from 32.7 % in 2004, according to the Employment in Europe report, published by the European Commission in Brussels.

25 November 2009 Spanish King Juan Carlos arrived in Malta on a two-day state visit. The King was greeted by President George Abela and was introduced to the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps and senior civil servants.

26 November 2009 King Juan Carlos of Spain concluded his short state visit to Malta with a ceremonial departure ceremony at the Palace Square in Valletta.

26 November 2009 A total of 124,332 tourists visited Malta during October 2009, down 2.1 percent on the same month in 2008, the NSO said. It reported that arrivals totalled 124,332. The total nights spent was estimated at 964,926. A majority of 104,746 tourists visited Malta for holiday purposes while an additional 11,596 came for business purposes. A decrease equivalent to 3.0 % was recorded in the number of first-time visitors, while repeat tourists remained comparatively stable. Arrivals from the United Kingdom remained practically unchanged when compared to the corresponding month last year. The Italian market performed strongly, while drops were registered from the French and German markets. During the same period, guest nights in collective accommodation recorded a drop of 6.7 %, while total nights spent in private accommodation decreased by 3.1 %. Overall, the average length of stay was calculated at 7.8 nights, down by 0.3 nights when compared to October 2008.

27 November 2009 European Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, announced the list of portfolios to the 26 member college of Commissioners. John Dalli was assigned the health and consumer policy portfolio, responsible for DG Health and Consumers, the Community Plant Variety office, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Food Safety Authority, the European Medicines Agency and the Executive Agency for health and consumers.

28 November 2009 The President, accompanied by Mrs Abela visited the Franciscan nuns in London, where Maltese patients and their relatives who are sent to London for treatment are housed.

28 November 2009 The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, inaugurates a Pen and Ink Watercolour Collection Exhibition entitled 'Heritage Saved' by Kenneth Zammit Tabona, proceeds of which will be in aid of Din I-Art Helwa's restoration programmes.

29 November 2009 The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy, inaugurated two new wards at Mount Carmel Hospital. The wards, dedicated to St George Preca and St Bernardetta, will be housing 63 elderly with 29 beds on the upper and 34 beds on the lower floor.

DECEMBER

1 December 2009 With seven hours of sunshine a day, the average norm for the month of November was up by about an hour, the Meteorological Office said. A total precipitation of 35.9mm was registered at Luqa airport, well below the November climate norm of 80mm. The highest precipitation in 24 hours was 13mm compared to the climate November norm of 162.5mm. A mean temperature of 16.9 degrees Celcius was recorded. This is slightly cooler than the average 30-year November mean.

2 December 2009 The National Statistics Office said that last year, 11,532 people, representing three % of the population, were registered as having a disability with the National Commission for Persons with a Disability. Disabilities were most prevalent in the older age groups, particularly among those aged 75 and over.

3 December 2009 A Maltese flag flew from Harrods department store in Knightsbridge London in honour of President George Abela's visit to the UK.

3 December 2009 The number of mobile telephone subscriptions at the end of September exceeded the size of the population, the NSO said. It said that subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased when compared to the corresponding period in 2008. The absolute number of mobile telephone subscriptions totalled 418,341. "Therefore, as at the end of September the mobile penetration rate per 100 persons in the population exceeded 100 %," the NSO said. The fixed-telephone subscription index increased by 4.4 per cent from 113.6 in 2008 (quarter 3) to 118.6 in 2009. The internet subscription index rose by 10.4 per cent from 135.9 in quarter 3 last year to 150.1 in 2009. 26 per cent of the population had an internet subscription. Total postal traffic for the third quarter of 2009 amounted to around 10.4 million items a drop of 3.7 per cent when compared to the corresponding quarter in 2008.

4 December 2009 There were 21,920 people aged 12 and over last year doing some form of voluntary work, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said that 49 per cent of them active within a voluntary organisation, 42 per cent within another entity and eight per cent were doing informal voluntary work.

5 December 2009 During a ceremony in Athens, Malta's European Commissioner, Joe Borg, was declared as International Personality of the Year by the Lloyd's List Greek Shipping Award in recognition of his "outstanding work over the past five years in shaping an integrated maritime policy for the EU".

6 December 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, inaugurated the rehabilitated St George's Square in Valletta.

6 December 2009 The President led a Charity Run from San Anton Palace to the President's Palace in Valletta. The run raised funds for the Community Chest Fund.

9 December 2009 Meat production in the third quarter of this year fell by 12.3 per cent to 3,190 tonnes when compared to the same quarter last year, according to the National Statistics Office. Pig meat production declined by 18.2 per cent and broiler meat production dropped by 4.7 per cent. Beef production increased by one per cent due to a 12.4 per cent rise in the number of cattle slaughtered.

10 December 2009 Exports dropped by €49.3 million in October, the NSO said today. Imports were down by €48.7 million. The visible trade gap widened by €0.6 million to €89 million compared to the corresponding month last year.

11 December 2009 Mater Dei Hospital has won this year Environment Award for Industry in the category of Conservation for Sustainable Development. These awards, launched by the Cleaner Technology Centre, are designed to recognise and promote organisations that have made a significant contribution to environmental protection last year. The adjudicating committee consisted of experts from various sectors.

11 December 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, committed Malta's voluntary participation in the EU's efforts to push for a global deal on climate change during ongoing talks in Copenhagen. Malta's commitment was made following negotiations during the first session of an EU Summit in Brussels.

12 December 2009 The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, attends the launch of the short film on Climate Change 'Beat the Change' organised by Friends of the Earth Malta. Various organisations joined forces to send out a clear message in favour of cleaner energy resources to combat climate change and other environmental problems.

13 December 2009 The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, visited the incinerator during the open day organised by Wasteserv Malta Ltd.

13 December 2009 Malta celebrated the 35th anniversary since it became a republic. 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 2009 A total of 20,970 Maltese went abroad in October, practically the same number as in October last year, NSO figures issued showed.

14 December 2009 The trade gap widened by €0.6 million in October when compared to the same month last year, according to the National Statistics Office. There were drops in the value of both imports and exports, to the tune of €48.7 million and €49.3 million respectively. The visible trade gap narrowed by €186.9 million in the first 10 months of this year, standing at €997.0 million, with a €579.2 million decrease in the value of imports and a €392.2 million drop in the value of exports.

15 December 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, greeted children from St Teresa School, who earlier this month produced the official Christmas Card for the Office of the Prime Minister. The children filled the Auberge de Castille's main hall with Christmas cheer as they sang carols and produced a short nativity play.

15 December 2009 The number of full-time gainfully occupied people in July was down by 1,747 from July 2008, the NSO said. It said that according to Employment and Training Corporation records, the number of registered unemployed increased by 1,563, to 7,521. In the 12 months to July, the number of full-time gainfully occupied persons in manufacturing fell by 2,377 (10.3 per cent).

16 December 2009 In 2009 there were five cruise liners that berthed in Gozo. They were carrying 2,504 passengers, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi said in reply to a parliamentary question.

17 December 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, made an appeal to countries participating in the UN climate change summit to come up with a meaningful, effective and fair deal. A number of heads of states had three minutes each to have their say and call for the kind of deal they are hoping for.

17 December 2009 An official study confirmed that Gozo topped the list for boarded out employees. According to the National Statistics' Office "Social Security Benefits: A Locality Perspective – 2009", the top five localities receiving invalidity pensions were all Gozitan. They are Ghasri (51.2 per 1,000 population), Xewkija (49.8), Fontana (43.4), Xaghra (39.7) and Kercem (39.4). The publication also confirms a north/south economic and social divide with the localities around the Grand Harbour having high rates of welfare dependency.

18 December 2009 The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, welcomed the address by US President Obama at the Copenhagen climate change conference.

18 December 2009 A total of 15,000 foreigners were residing in Malta at the beginning of last year - excluding asylum seekers and illegal immigrants - making up almost 4% of the total population. The largest chunk, 8,000 persons, were EU citizens, according to new statistics issued by the EU yesterday. Malta's population is 410,000.

20 December 2009 Malta Freeport welcomed CMA CGM's flagship vessel, the Christophe Colomb, which is on its voyage linking Asia to Europe. The Christophe Colomb is the largest vessel ever to call at the Freeport. It is also one of the world's largest containerhips having an overall length of 365.50 metres, a beam of 51.2 metres and a draught of 15.5 metres. It can carry 13,344TEUs (containers).

21 December 2009 A survey on ICT usage among households and individuals has shown that computer and internet access amongst Maltese households rose to 67 per cent and 64 per cent respectively this year, the NSO said. The NSO said different penetration rates were obtained when comparing internet access by household type and household income. Internet access in households rose from 36 per cent for households earning less than €10,000 to 93 per cent for households earning €25,000 or more. More than half of the individuals aged 16-74 in Malta and Gozo made use of computer and internet. These figures were highest among persons aged between 16 and 24 averaging over 90 per cent for both sexes.

21 December 2009 Professor Edwin Busuttil, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, has passed away, aged 86.

22 December 2009 Hotel guests decreased by 3.7 percentage points in October compared to the same month last year, NSO figures issued this morning show. The NSO said that arrivals in collective accommodation establishments amounted to 108,473.

22 December 2009 Farsons CEO Louis Farrugia has been appointed chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority, taking over from Sam Mifsud, the government said yesterday.

22 December 2009 Cruise passenger traffic grew by 17.4 per cent last month in comparison with November of last year, according to the National Statistics Office. Embarkations in Malta totalled 1,505 and landings amounted to 1,544. EU passengers made up just over two thirds of all traffic, at 66.2 per cent. American passengers made up 57.7 per cent of all non-EU traffic. There was, however, a drop of 22.4 per cent in total passenger traffic in the first 11 months of the year when compared to the same period last year. EU visitors accounted for 74 per cent of total arrivals. Females made up 52.1 per cent of all visitors and 33.4 per cent consisted of people aged 40-59. Those aged 60-79 made up 30.4 per cent of the total.

23 December 2009 Malta and Italy have signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of health and medical sciences.

23 December 2009 The Retail Price Index last month went down to 118.66 from 119.12 in October 2009, the NSO said.

24 December 2009 The shortfall between the government's recurrent revenue and total expenditure increased by €139.5 million to €410.5 million between January and last month. The National Statistics Office said that recurrent revenue for the first 11 months exhibited a decline of €34.3 million, while total expenditure rose by €105.2 million, widening the deficit between recurrent revenue and total expenditure to €410.5 million.

26 December 2009 €2.3 million were collected in the 14th edition of the charity marathon I-Istrina. The event was for the first time held under the patronage of the President George Abela.

28 December 2009 Gozo's contribution to the national gross domestic product at market prices is 5.9 per cent, or €335 million, according to provisional estimates for last year. The National Statistics Office said that gross value added (GVA) for Malta grew by 5.1 per cent in 2008, while that for Gozo went up by 3.7 per cent. Most service activities continued to contribute positively towards Gozo's gross value added. Employment in industry, including in the energy sector, declined in both islands. Gozo accounted for 9.3 per cent of the total increase in employment in 2008. An increase in total employment was registered in both Malta and Gozo last year, mainly driven by the services sectors. Declines in employment were experienced in the primary and industry sectors, however, employment in Gozo's agriculture and fishing sector registered slight increases. A decline in unemployment was registered for Malta in 2008, whilst Gozo experienced a slight increase. Both regions experienced a continued growth in population.

29 December 2009 The number of registered unemployed last month was 988 people more than in the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. The number of registered unemployed last month numbered 7,588 - 6,801 people in Malta and 787 in Gozo. In the 12 months to November, those registering for work in Malta increased by 932 (15.9 per cent), those in Gozo by 56 (7.7 per cent).

29 December 2009 The first 100,000 doses of swine flu vaccines arrived in Malta.

30 December 2009 The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, distributed money, which comes

from the Co-financing EU Projects' Scheme, to nine local councils. The local councils are benefitting from €303,000 to take part in different EU programmes. They are Vittoriosa, Għarb, Hamrun, Kirkop, Dingli, Senglea, Mtarfa, San Lawrenz, Valletta. The Association of Local Councils shall also be benefitting.

30 December 2009 A record number of contacts were made this year with Maltese embassies abroad, the Foreign Ministry said. The ministry said that just under 20,000 contacts were made, a substantial increase over last year's 7,000. The increase could be attributed to the ministry's emphasis on embassies' work leading to a greater understanding of their importance by the people. The ministry said that The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also took part in more than 30 official visits, a third of which were to non-EU countries including the Middle East, Arab states, the US and Australia.

30 December 2009 An estimated 72,490 tourists visited Malta last month spending here a total of 558,384 nights. The National Statistics Office said that the majority - 60,463 came for a holiday, 9,069, for business purposes. The number of first time visitors increased by 3.6 per cent, while repeat tourists registered a drop of 9.3 per cent. Most, 87.8 per cent, were EU residents and nearly all came to Malta by air.

31 December 2009 Internet use was up by five per cent over 2008, according to a survey conducted by the National Statistics Office. Some 64 per cent of Maltese households had internet access this year compared to 59 per cent last year. The survey also indicated that 67 per cent of Maltese households had computers.

31 December 2009 In the past months, there were more than 2,000 rescue interventions by the animal ambulance pilot project. All cats and dogs rescues were neutered and microchipped, the Rural Affairs Ministry said. The animal ambulance pilot project was extended and offered 24 hours a day by the Animal Welfare Department, which has been strengthened with additional human resources and vehicles.

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