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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

- **01 January 2010** 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.
- **01 January 2010** December was the second warmest on record at Balzan with a mean monthly temperature of 16°C. MeteoMalta said that the warmest ever December since temperature records started being taken at Balzan in 1987 was of 16.2°C in 1989. Christmas Day was the warmest day of the month with a maximum temperature of 24.1°C, however the warmest December day ever was December 8, 1987 with a high of 24.9°C.
- **01 January 2010** The President George Abela visited prisoners at the Corradino Correctional Facility.
- **06 January 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, attended the handing over of an automatic external defibrillator to the Administration of the Courts of Justice by the Malta Heart Foundation in the presence of Prof Albert Fenech and Mr Alex Manche.
- **07 January 2010** Eighteen windmills have been restored in Gozo through the assistance by the Ministry of Gozo. The ministry said it subsidised farmers up to 75 %of the cost of restoring their windmills as part of a scheme launched in the context of the eco-island project. Lions Club Zone Malta this morning donated glaucoma (eye disease) screening equipment worth over €50,000 to replace equipment which has been in use for the past 15 years in government health centres.
- **07 January 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the Ministry for Social Policy, was presented with Glaucoma screening equipment. The equipment includes six Tonometers which are used to detect glaucoma and a Visual Field Machine which checks the strength of the optic nerve.The funds were raised through a donation from Lions Club International, the Good Causes Fund, and local fund-raising events by Lions Clubs.
- **07 January 2010** Malta's international trade remained in decline in November, with imports down by €42.4 million and exports down by €22.3 million, NSO figures issued today show. The trade gap narrowed by €20.1 million to €66.0 million compared to November 2008.
- **07 January 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, attended the handing over of an automatic external defibrillator to the

Administration of the Courts of Justice by the Malta Heart Foundation in the presence of Prof Albert Fenech and Mr Alex Manche.

- **09 January 2010** Citta Magica event was held in Valletta. Activities included bands playing, a display by police dogs and their handlers and a historical re-enactment at St George's Square.
- **09 January 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, attended the flag raising ceremony and announced a new investment at Hal Ferh Complex site, recently acquired by the Island Hotels Group Holdings.
- **09 January 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, visited road works which are being carried out in Marsalforn.
- **09 January 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, visited the new civic centre which is being built in Ghajnsielem. The building will incorporate a police station and a health centre.
- **12 January 2010** The government collected €2.5 million up to December 31 in overdue income tax through its amnesty on tax penalties, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in parliament.
- **12 January 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs inaugurated photovoltaic panels at the premises of Michael Debono Ltd in Zebbug.
- **13 January 2010** There were slightly more male births than female births in the first half of last year, and there were 477 births to single mothers, information given in Parliament shows. The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said that between January and June 2009 there were 1,954 births, of which 1,010 were boys. There were 24 pairs of twins and a set of triplets. Mr Dalli said 174 babies were born to mothers who were not Maltese compared to 413 for the whole of 2008.
- **13 January 2010** Twelve schoolchildren last year allegedly committed sexual offences against 14 students within school buildings, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said. She said the cases were reported to the Child Safety Services
- **13 January 2010** The government registered a deficit of €90.9 million in the third quarter last year, up from €47.7 million in the third quarter in 2008, the NSO said. During the period, total revenue declined by €53.5 million to €517.6 million.
- **13 January 2010** European Council President Herman Van Rompuy visited Malta for talks with the Prime Minister. The visit to Malta was part of the tour of EU capitals by the President.
- **14 January 2010** The Park and Ride service between Valletta and the car park in Blata l-Bajda carried 1,073,528 passengers in the year up to the end of August 2009, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said in Parliament. He said this number excluded passengers who used route bus 198.
- **15 January 2010** The AFM paraded to bid farewell to its commander, Brigadier Carmel Vassallo, and welcome his successor, Col Martin Xuereb..

- **15 January 2010** The Index of Consumer Prices went down slightly to 108.38 last month from 108.57 in November, the National Statistics Office said. In December, the 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1.8 %, whereas the annual rate of inflation stood at -0.4 %.
- **15 January 2010** H.E. The President George Abela greeted the resident and non-resident members of the Diplomatic Corps at the exchange of New Year Greetings.
- **16 January 2010** Staff from Munich Re insurance company, led by the Malta CEO, Konstantin von Jagow, planted 190 trees in the new part of Kennedy Grove today as part of the 34U campaign. Some 80,000 trees have been planted since the 34U campaign was launched five years ago.
- **16 January 2010** The 200 photovoltaic panels and 2,300 solar water heaters subsidised by the government last year, as well as the one million energy-saving bulbs distributed to all households, saved the country close to €6 million in electricity, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister
- said while speaking at an NSTF Mini-European Assembly.
- **18 January 2010** Ninety one persons died tragically last year, The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in Parliament. He said 15 were foreigners.
- **18 January 2010** The government stopped the granting of social benefits in 861 cases because of fraud during the first nine months of last year, the Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said in reply to a parliamentary question. He said that in the process the government saved €3,134,439. For the whole of 2008, the government suspended benefits in 960 cases and saved €2,491,502 while the previous year, the suspended cases totalled 982 and the government saved €3,482,410.
- **19 January 2010** The number of reported cases of domestic violence jumped by 25 % in 2009 over 2008. A total of 602 cases were reported last year compared to 477 in the previous year. 576 of the cases allegedly took place in Malta and just 26 cases were reported in Gozo. 59 cases involved children but the vast majority of victims, 467, were women. A spokesman for the Home Affairs Ministry said the increase did not necessarily mean an increase in domestic violence, but greater awareness by the public that such cases should be reported.
- **19 January 2010** Malta has recorded the highest proportion of e-commerce turnover with non-EU countries at 56%, followed by Slovakia with 34% and Ireland with 23%. Figures issued by the EU show that the share of enterprise turnover generated from e-commerce in 2008 varied significantly between member states. The highest shares were recorded in Ireland (26%) Finland and Sweden, both at 18%. Malta's share was 11%, on a par with Slovakia and only ahead of Lithuania, Poland and Romania. Hungary had the highest e-commerce turnover with other EU member states at 50%. Malta had 37%. Understandably given the size of the country, e-commerce turnover within Malta itself was lowest in the EU, at 7 %. The proportion of enterprises with a broadband connection in January 2009 was 94% in Finland, followed by Spain and Malta on 93%.
- **19 January 2010** The number of Maltese going abroad in November reached 23,028, up by 7 % when compared to November 2008, the NSO said.
- **19 January 2010** Of the 391 persons reported missing last year, 364 had been traced and four were found dead, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in a reply to a parliamentary question. He said that there were 263

Maltese, of whom 115 were men and 148 were women. Foreigners totalled 128 - 69 men and 59 women.

- **19 January 2010** 91 people died tragically last year - 76 Maltese and 15 foreigners, The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in a reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 January 2010** The Libyan Foreign Minister, Mousa Kousa, was in Malta for the 26th meeting of the Malta-Libya joint commission.
- **20 January 2010** The Rural Affairs Ministry took part in the International Fair of Berlin promoting local products. A total of 1,600 exhibitors from 56 countries took part in the fair. More than 400,000 people attended.
- **20 January 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, announced the Microinvest scheme, a tax credit scheme for small businesses.
- **20 January 2010** The Hon. Gianfranco Fini, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic, made an official one day visit to Malta.
- **21 January 2010** The number of cruise passengers arriving in Malta in December rose by a third when compared to December 2008. The NSO said that 20,079 persons visited Malta on cruise ships in December, up by 33 per cent over the comparative month in 2008. Passengers from EU countries made up 58.1 per cent of the total traffic, with the main markets being Germany, Italy and France.
- **21 January 2010** The government started distributing fruit once a week to 130 primary schools in a scheme co-financed by the EU. Some 30,000 primary school children will receive the fruit once a week in recyclable plastic containers. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, distributed some of the fruit himself at St Monica School, Gzira.
- **21 January 2010** Over 7,100 new cars were licensed in Malta last year, when the total number of vehicles stood at 300,347. Data released by the National Statistics Office shows that 4,015 cars, or 1.33% of the total, were scrapped in 2009. A further 11,436 vehicles were garaged, meaning they were no longer licensed for use on the road. In the period under review, 18,813 vehicles were newly licensed, 7,133 of them being new cars. This represented a 43.7% increase in the number of newly-licensed cars when compared to 2008. The number of vehicles on Maltese roads rose by 5,689 between the end of 2008 and the end of last year, even if 15,542 vehicles were taken off the road by being garaged, exported or scrapped. Of the total number of cars in Malta, 76.3% are private and the remaining commercial vehicles.
- **22 January 2010** The Retail Price Index went down to 118.35 last month from 118.66 in November. The NSO said the difference primarily reflected a 0.94 per cent drop in the food index, due to lower prices for vegetables.
- **26 January 2010** Enemalta last year (up to Dec 15) received 258 claims for compensation from people who said their appliances had been damaged by power surges or other causes related to the power supply, The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications
- said. The minister said payment was made in 42 cases while another 92 claims were found to be justified and final documentation was being awaited so that payment can be made. A further 17 cases are under investigation. There were 107 cases which were turned down because Enemalta was not at fault.

- **26 January 2010** The police last year had four reports of alleged sexual abuse by parents against their own children, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in Parliament. He said all cases were being investigated.
- **26 January 2010** Hotel occupancy rates reached 38.1 per cent in November, a drop of 1.6 percentage points when compared with November 2008, the NSO said today. The total number of arrivals in collective accommodation establishments was 68,608, of which 82.2 per cent were non-resident arrivals. Total nights spent were recorded at 408,240, a drop of 5.9 per cent over the corresponding month in 2008. There was a drop of 33.3 per cent in the number of nights spent in 3-star hotels.
- **26 January 2010** Malta and Jersey signed a double taxation avoidance agreement. The agreement was signed by Maltese High Commissioner Joseph Zammit Tabona and Chief Minister Terry Le Sueur. The signing ceremony took place at the Malta High Commission in London.
- **27 January 2010** There were nearly 12,000 unemployed people in the third quarter last year, amounting to 6.9 % of the population, according to the Labour Force Survey. The National Statistics Office said the survey indicated an employment rate of 55.1 per cent (162,567 people). The number of unemployed reached 11,986 and that of inactive people 175,581.
- **27 January 2010** The government is owed €55,944,961 in arrears of national insurance by companies, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in Parliament. The total number of companies in arrears is 5,612, with 514 of the companies in arrears since 1998.
- **28 January 2010** Bus owners signed contracts to sell 343 buses to the government. The total number of buses is 508. In terms of the agreement between the government and the Public Transport Association €98,000 will be paid for the old buses and €123,000 for the low-floor types.
- **29 January 2010** A bilateral agreement for the sharing of information between Malta and Dubai has been signed by The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land in the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Investment and Sultan Bin Butti Bin Mejren on behalf of Malta's and Dubai's lands departments. The aim of the agreement is to establish contact with the best international land registries. It provides for wide consultation on a wide variety of technical subjects related to the registration of property and regulation.
- **29 January 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, inaugurated Castello dei Baroni, which opened its doors as a tourist attraction. Built in 1783 during the time of Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan Polduc, the Castello is one of Malta's formerly hidden historical treasures.
- **29 January 2010** The December industrial producer price index went down by 0.4 per cent compared to the previous month and by 9.1 per cent compared to the same month the previous year, according to provisional estimates compiled by the National Statistics Office. The NSO said the decline was mainly due to lower prices in the domestic and total export markets, by 0.7 and 0.2 per cent respectively.
- **29 January 2010** More than 1,000 people including 814 full timers were now employed in the insurance sector, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment

- Finance said during the inauguration of new Atlas offices in Birkirkara. The minister said the sector grew six-fold since Malta's membership in the EU. Premiums increased from €116 million to €650 million.
- **30 January 2010** Last year sports organisations benefitted from a total €3.3 million in assistance by the sport council. Speaking at a business breakfast, The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport in the Ministry of Education and Culture said this figure excluded the running costs and capital investment in sport facilities as well as sponsorship by both government and private organisations. He said, through this money, organisations were in a position to improve the quality of their sport and continue with more professional training.
- **31 January 2010** Citrus Fest, a fund-raising activity organised by the Community Chest Fund and the Rural Affairs Ministry's Naturalment Malti campaign, took place at San Anton Palace. Visitors had the opportunity to take a peek at the President's private orange grove and gardens. Visitors could buy oranges, along with citrus products from the Lija, Balzan and Attard council stands. Some of the proceeds from the sale of oranges and related products went to the Salesians to rebuild devastated schools in Haiti.

FEBRUARY

- **01 February 2010** Trade and investment relations between China and Malta were discussed during talks between The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, and Chinese Deputy Minister of Trade Zhong Shan, who was in Malta.
- **01 February 2010** Malta had considerably less rainfall last month than is the norm for January, according to figures issued by the MIA's Met Office. Total rainfall registered last month at Luqa Airport amounted to just 56.6 mm. That was 34.0 mm less than the January norm. In contrast, the highest amount of rainfall recorded during January was in 2009 when a total of 248.2 mm of rain fell over the Maltese islands. The average temperature last month was 13.4°C, making it warmer than the January norm for the mean air temperature by 1.2°C.
- **01 February 2010** Almost 7% of the population was without a job between July and September, according to official statistics. There were 11,986 jobless and 162,567 employed people in the period in question, according to the Labour Force Survey issued by the National Statistics Office. Another 175,851 were registered as inactive, the survey said.
- **01 February 2010** A two-year restoration project started on the Valletta bastions, on the stretch of fortifications between St Andrew's Bastions, next to Biago Steps, and those below Castille.
- **01 February 2010** At the end of November 2009 there were 460 persons registered as disabled with the Employment and Training Corporation. Of these, 223 had been registering for a year or less, while 37 had been registering for more than five years, The Hon. John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **02 February 2010** Seven people, including two pedestrians, lost their life in traffic accidents between October and December last year. The National Statistics Offices

said that in that period, the number of reported traffic accidents reached 4,362, which was 865 more than in the corresponding quarter the previous year.

- **02 February 2010** The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, launched the reform of schools for children with special needs. She said that the schools would now be integrated in the colleges system and become known as resources centres, who will be used regularly by students with special needs who attend mainstream schools. There are currently 198 students in the schools for students with special needs.
- **02 February 2010** The number of self-employed persons who are in arrears in the payment of social security contributions is 20,385, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in Parliament. They owe the government €37,508,741.
- **02 February 2010** January was warmer than usual, according to the Meteorological Office. With the mean temperature standing at 13.4°C, last month was warmer than the average of 12.2°C for January. The warmest day was the seventh with a high of 20.3°C. However, this did not exceed the highest temperature ever recorded in January at the Malta International Airport since 1947, which was 22.2°C measured in 1982. 56.6mm of rainfall fell at Luqa Airport, 34mm less than the January average.
- **02 February 2010** There are currently 34 youths with pending cases before the Juvenile Court, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **02 February 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, had a visit by Toly Products Chief Executive, Andy Gatesy and the company's international sales team. The company, which has been in Malta for 40 years, manufactures plastic packaging for cosmetic products. During the meeting Mr Gatesy expressed his appreciation for the support of the government, especially in the past year. Toly Products was one of the companies that received government aid for the training of employees and capital investment in new technologies and product lines last year.
- **02 February 2010** Up to January 28 there were 960 pending cases before the Family Court in Malta, with 31 cases put off sine die. In Gozo there are 60 cases, three of which have been put off sine die.
- The information was given by The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **03 February 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited auditing firm Ernst & Young, which celebrated its 10th anniversary. The Prime Minister said that the financial services sector grew by 22 per cent between the third quarter of 2008 and that of last year.
- **03 February 2010** Unemployment in December rose by 1,307 compared to December 2008 and reached 7,680, the NSO said today. It was also up by 92 over November. The NSO said there were 6,879 people registering for work in Malta and 801 in Gozo.
- **03 February 2010** Salv Gauci has been appointed Chief Electoral Commissioner, succeeding Edward Gatt. Mr Gauci joined the public service in 1967, where he held several positions including director of the Budget Office and director general in the Finance Ministry's budget division.
- **04 February 2010** The volume of fresh fish landings in the last quarter of 2009 increased by 17.7 per cent while the wholesale value decreased by 17.1 per cent when

compared to the corresponding quarter in 2008, the NSO said today. It said that 257,857 kilograms of fish were received at the fish market. This increase was mostly attributed to higher landings of Dorado (lampuka) which increased by 60 per cent.

- **05 February 2010** The Hon Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land, lead devolution exercise of government property to Qala and Xaghra Local Councils. The Hon Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information also attended.
- **05 February 2010** The visible trade gap narrowed by €30.1 million in December 2009 when compared to the same month last year, according to preliminary figures published by the National Statistics Office. The NSO said that while the visible trade gap last December stood at €69.3 million, down by €30.1 million due to decreases in imports of €69.1 million and in exports of €39 million.
- **05 February 2010** A total 73 per cent of Maltese internet users shop online, a survey by the Malta Communications Authority has found. The authority said the survey focused on internet access and usage, e-commerce usage, concerns when purchasing online and the perceptions and reluctance of certain demographic groups to purchase online.
- **05 February 2010** The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, and the Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, launched this year's edition of the `Valletta Grand Prix` Historic and Classic Car Event organised by the Valletta Grand Prix Foundation with the collaboration of the Malta Tourism Authority and the National Sports Council.
- **05 February 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, visited and closed the activities that were held on the occasion of World Cancer Day. The event was organised by the Department of Health and Disease Prevention.
- **07 February 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited the 400 year anniversary celebrations of the Wignacourt Tower at St. Paul's Bay.
- **08 February 2010** There were 802 non-fatal accidents at work in the last quarter of 2009, a decrease of 3.8 per cent compared to last quarter of last year, the NSO said today. But there were also two fatalities whereas there has been none in the last quarter of 2008.
- **09 February 2010** The Hon. John Dalli resigned as minister and as an MP. His resignations followed the appointment of the new European Commission. Mr Dalli has taken over as Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy. Mr Dalli had been an MP since 1987. He was Finance Minister for 10 years and also served as Foreign Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Industry.
- **09 February 2010** Parliamentary Joe Cassar has been promoted minister for health and care of the elderly in a Cabinet reshuffle. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, was given additional responsibilities for the environment and for culture. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister was also given other responsibilities, including consumer affairs and fair competition. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, was given additional responsibility for employment and family affairs. Responsibility for Enemalta and the Water Services Corporation has been transferred from the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications to the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment. The

Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land in the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Investment retains responsibility for lands but also becomes directly responsible for the self-employed and small businesses.

- **09 February 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, visited works at Bosk tal-Imtarfa. The Mtarfa local council is cleaning up l-Bosk tal-Imtarfa to transform it into a park. The works include the cleaning up of the place, tree pruning, the reopening of pathways and the placing of benches and tables.
- **10 February 2010** The Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care was sworn in this morning by President George Abela. The ceremony took place at the Palace in Valletta.
- **11 February 2010** Airport passenger movements increased by 7% in January, with the increases coming mostly from the UK and Italian markets, MIA said today. It said 147,539 used Malta airport last month, an increase of 9,721 over January 2009. Traffic increased by 5.7% from the UK, 7.0% from Italy and 140% from Spain but dropped by 11% from Germany. Aircraft movements were up 5.2% and cargo increased by 1.4%. Malta experienced a downturn in airport movements in 11 of the 12 months last year but saw growth in December.
- **11 February 2010** The crime rate has been consistently falling for the past five years and is now at 1998 levels, the Home Affairs Ministry said today. The ministry said that last year, general theft was down 12 per cent compared to the previous year. The total crime rate was down 14 per cent. Crime had dropped 34 per cent between 2009 and 2005, the ministry said.
- **12 February 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs launched an educational campaign including a distribution of free green bags to localities collaborating with Greenpak.
- **12 February 2010** An agreement on the transfer of patients for medical treatment abroad was signed between Air Malta and the Health Department. The agreement leads to a more structured system of how the airline gives preferential fares to patients needing treatment abroad.
- **14 February 2010** The amount of separated waste for recycling last year was about 6.7 per cent of the total household waste, up from 5.5 per cent, according to figures presented in parliament by The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. Maltese households increased the amount of waste separated for recycling in 2009 but the figure is short of the minimum target set by the EU of 25 per cent of waste generated.
- **15 February 2010** The full-time gainfully occupied population in August 2009 totalled 144,549, down by 1,711 when compared to the previous year and by 411 over the previous month, the NSO said. The main drops were in the transport and tourism sectors. "This drop was the result of a decrease of 1,711 persons, or 1.2 per cent, in the full-time gainfully occupied population, and an increase of 1,322 persons, or 21.6 per cent, on the unemployment register," the NSO said.
- **15 February 2010** Surgeons at Mater Dei Hospital performed almost 39,000 operations last year, a jump of 2,768 over the previous year. Statistics, dating back to last June, showed that 22,621 patients were still on the waiting list, down by 105 from January 2009.

- **16 February 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs received a courtesy call by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, the Hon. Stefania Craxi. Both sides discussed the important missions Malta and Italy have for a stronger Mediterranean region and the strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean relations.
- **16 February 2010** Energy saving schemes, including assistance for people to buy energy saving equipment, were saving the country €5 million a year in electricity generation costs, Resources Minister George Pullicino said while speaking at the Malta Resources Authority, where hundreds of people went to apply for financial schemes to assist them to install domestic solar heaters or photovoltaic units.
- **16 February 2010** The volume of fresh fruit and vegetables in the fourth quarter of last year increased by 4.7 per cent, whereas the wholesale value decreased by 17.8 per cent, when compared to the corresponding period in 2008, the NSO said.
- **17 February 2010** The Hon Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, accompanied by the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister for Education, Employment and the Family, visited Cardinal Health. The company, a leading American company which produces medical products was set up in 1995 and currently employs 110 workers.
- **17 February 2010** Fourteen products were withdrawn from the Maltese market last year after the Malta Standards Authority deemed them unsafe. The products, that were notified to the European Commission under the Rapex system, consisted of six electrical appliances, two types of lighters, three chemical products, two toys and one food-imitating product.
- **17 February 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- travelled to Rome to meet his Italian and Libyan counterparts, Franco Frattini and Mousa Kousa to discuss the withdrawal of visas by the North African country.
- **18 February 2010** Malta has experienced the second hottest February day, with the temperature reaching a maximum of 24.1°C. The Met Office at Malta International Airport said the highest temperature ever registered at Luqa Airport in February was on February 18th, 1960 when the mercury reached 26.7 degrees.
- **18 February 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment visited Methode Electronics Malta Ltd. The Minister said during a tour of the factory that the company had now turned the corner. It increased its workforce by 60 over the past few months and extended its production to include busbars. It would also start production of touch sensors within three months and was considering venturing into new areas. The investment stated in the past few months exceeds €6 million.
- **18 February 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs,
- discussed the current visa dispute between Libya and Switzerland with the Swiss Minister of Justice Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf at a meeting held in Interlaken, Switzerland.
- **18 February 2010** Peter Micallef was elected to Parliament in a casual election to fill the seat vacated by John Dalli. He inherited 2,644 votes when the quota was 1,879.

- **20 February 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, accompanied by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, visited ongoing works at Ta' Pinu Road in Gozo.
- **23 February 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went down to 107.79 in January from 108.38 in December 2009, the NSO said today.
- **25 February 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment visited Farsons. The company is a diversified group with its turnover resulting partly from manufacturing that is from the sale of beers, soft drinks and water produced in Malta, and from other group activities, including the importation, wholesale and retail of food and beverages, the operations of franchised food retailing establishments and property management. Details of a €14 million investment were given by group chief executive Louis A. Farrugia.
- **25 February 2010** There were 2,801 first time blood donors last year, 145 less than the number of new donors the previous year which had been a record one. National blood transfusion centre director Alex Aquilina told a news conference that 19,384 people called at the centre in 2009, against 20,310 in 2008. There were 16,927 callers in 2007, 16,080 in 2006 and 15,656 in 2005. The majority of donors – 9,432, were men, 5,188 were women.
- **25 February 2010** Swiss H.E. Mr Bernardino Regazzoni, Ambassador of Switzerland presented letters of credentials to H.E. President George Abela.
- **25 February 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, received a first call by H.E. Mr Bernardino Regazzoni, Ambassador of Switzerland.
- **25 February 2010** While addressing a news conference, The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues and Land in the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Investment, said that a process that will lead to the digitisation of 131,000 files at the Government Property Division has been embarked upon. He said the government owned 60 per cent of territory in Malta. Some of it was leased, vacant or under a lease that was nearing its end. Under the new system, called Lands And Estate Management Information System, – a process that would take three years to implement, all information regarding this land would be accessible to the public through the internet.
- **27 February 2010** A website www.tfal.org.mt was set up by the Commissioner for Children to promote children's accessibility to the office. The website will enable the commissioner to continue working in the best interests of children. It was designed to be engaging and appealing to children of all ages and divided into sections for those aged three to five, six to nine, 10 to 13 and 14 to 17. The website incorporates a section for adults, providing information on resources and legislation for researchers, academics and those interested in the field of children's rights.
- **28 February 2010** The Hon George Pullicino Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, layed the foundation stone for the new Mellieha Family Park.
- **28 February 2010** H.E. The President George Abela, paid a visit to Żabbar on an invitation of the local council. He met young St Patrick's football players and attended mass at the parish church. He also visited various band clubs while Mrs Abela called on the Dominican and Ursuline sisters.

MARCH

- 01 March 2010** The rainfall last month was among the lowest for February since records started being kept, the MIA Met Office said. It said that 15.6 mm of rain fell last month at Malta International Airport which was much less than the climate norm for February, which is 61.3 mm. The wettest day was February 10, with a total of just 5 mm. The highest February rainfall on record occurred in 1965 with a total of 187.9 mm, while the driest one was that of 1957 with just 3.5 mm.
- 01 March 2010** A donation of €70,282 was made by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa. This was the first direct donation to the Fund by a foreign state.
- 01 March 2010** Unemployment in January climbed to 7,758, an increase of 770 persons when compared to January 2009 and by 78 over last December, the NSO said. It said there were 6,972 unemployed persons in Malta and 786 in Gozo. The NSO said the number of men on the unemployment register increased over the year by 624 or 11.6 per cent, whilst the number of women went up by 146 or 9.2 per cent.
- 01 March 2010** The deficit fell by €29.4 million to total €107.1 million in January when compared to the same month last year. The NSO said the drop was due to a €4.2 million rise in revenue and a €25.2 million drop in expenditure.
- 02 March 2010** The number of births in Malta and Gozo between 2004 and 2008 rose marginally, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said in reply to a parliamentary question. He said there were 3,887 births in 2004; 3,858 in 2005; 3,885 in 2006; 3,871 in 2007 and 4,126 in 2008.
- 02 March 2010** The number of tourists visiting Malta in January increased 10% when compared to the same month last year, the NSO said. The number of visitors totalled 56,952, representing 436,450 nights. An estimated 48,375 tourists visited Malta for holiday purposes, accounting for the absolute majority of arrivals, while another 6,780 tourists came to Malta for business purposes.
- 02 March 2010** The Maltese Central Visa Unit last year issued travel visas to 10,569 Libyan travellers, the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, has revealed. The number of visas issued to Libyan applicants was second only to Russians, with Malta having issued 14,787 visas to travellers from that country. In all, Malta last year issued 34,776 visas. The visas granted to Libyan travellers included 7,210 Schengen short-stay visas, while almost all the rest were national long stay visas.
- 02 March 2010** The law courts in Malta and Gozo handed down 424 suspended sentences last year, The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in Parliament. He said that 374 persons were handed effective prison sentences.
- 02 March 2010** A total of 291 notifications of amicable marriage separation were filed at the Family Court last year, a drop from 313 in the previous year, figures given in Parliament show. The figures for last year include 15 such notifications for Gozo, twice that of 2008. There were 98 notifications for Malta and Gozo in 2007. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said 149 cases for separation were also filed at the law courts while the number of pending court cases stood at 598.
- 02 March 2010** A total of 90,366 persons have taken the H1N1 vaccine but another 242,000 doses remain available, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care

- said in Parliament.
- **03 March 2010** A total of 2,597 persons lost their job last year and started to register for work, pushing unemployment to 7,680, the Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **03 March 2010** Over the past six years, Malta paid a total of €453,754.34 to various countries in the EU for medical assistance given to Maltese travellers who made use of the European health assurance card (formerly known as the E111 card). The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said that over the past five years Malta was paid € 842,291,75 for the same services provided to tourists in Malta.
- **04 March 2010** Lieutenant General David Leakey, Director General of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), was on a three day visit to Malta as guest of the Armed Forces of Malta.
- **04 March 2010** The full-time gainfully occupied population dropped by 1,806 in the year to September, while the number of part-timers grew by 2,050, the NSO said. It said the full time gainfully occupied in September totalled 144,514, down 35 from August. The number of registered unemployed increased by 1,425 over the year to 7,521.
- **05 March 2010** Women outnumbered men by 1,863 in 2008 when the female population in Malta reached 207,736. In a statement the NSO said 22 per cent were aged between 50 and 64 and nearly the same proportion was between 20 and 34. The percentage of females aged 65 and over was four per cent higher than that for males.
- **06 March 2010** A total of €73,000 were handed out to 30 fishermen in compensation for the early closing of the swordfish fishing season last year. The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said the season closed two months earlier last year on the recommendation of ICCAT to allow the fish to regenerate.
- **08 March 2010** In the 12 months ended September 2009, global prescription sales growth of generic drugs climbed by 7.7%, up from 3.6% in 2008. The value added of this sector reaches 300% of the average value added of all the direct productive activities. Annually each person employed in this sector adds value to around €110,000, whereas the average of the whole manufacturing sector is of €32,000. Employment in this sector has increased by 50% in the last three years. These companies employ a total of 1,200 persons - 6% of the total population engaged in direct productive activities. This was said by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, during the opening speech at the 7th World meeting on Pharmaceuticals.
- **08 March 2010** The number of students who came to Malta to enhance their knowledge of the English language in 2009 was 83,288, The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said in reply to a parliamentary question. In reply to another parliamentary question, Mrs Cristina said that according to the latest statistics collected by the supervisory board on the teaching of English as a foreign language, published by the National Office of Statistics on June 15, 2009, the sector was employing 1,340 workers in 2008. All of them were teachers, of whom 115 full-timers and 1,225 part-timers. To a third question, the Minister said no aid was given to anyone who wanted to set up a school for the teaching of English as a foreign language.

- 08 March 2010** Last year the government paid a total of €21,579,059 to foreign doctors, consultants and specialists at Mater Dei Hospital, The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said in reply to a parliamentary question. The doctors were paid €5,816,237 in salaries and €5,961,548 in allowances, the consultants €3,559,841 and €3,726,479, and the specialists €984,498 and 1,530,456. In no case was any payment made for overtime.
- 08 March 2010** A table supplied by The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment in reply to a parliamentary question shows that the number of births in Malta and Gozo between 2004 and 2007 was consistent at just under 3,900, but in 2008 it jumped to over 4,000. The respective numbers for the mentioned years were 3,887 in 2004, 3,858, 3,885, 3,871 and 4,126 in 2008. The total for 2008 included three births "whose locality is unknown". Statistics on the number of births in 2009 are still being collated.
- 08 March 2010** The total number of newly-registered vehicles in Malta and Gozo between 2005 and 2009 was 38,412, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in reply to a parliamentary question. There were 7,529 in 2005, 8,248 in 2006, 8,175 in 2007, 7,288 in 2008 and 7,172 in 2009.
- 08 March 2010** A total of 15,335 bags of blood were donated in Malta between September 2008 and September 2009, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said in reply to a parliamentary question. He said the average number of bags donated in a year was between 14,000 and 15,000. There had been 14,408 in 2006, 14,125 in 2007 and 14,810 in 2008.
- 08 March 2010** Between January and September 2009 there were 286 patients receiving end-stage renal disease treatment at Mater Dei Hospital, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said in reply to a parliamentary. Answering another question, he said that at the end of November 2009 there had been 112 patients receiving continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) treatment on out-patient basis. Between January and September 2009 there had been 174 patients making use of haemodialysis at Mater Dei.
- 08 March 2010** The Commission for Domestic Violence inaugurated a reference library on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- 09 March 2010** An average of 57 abortions a year were carried out on Maltese women in England and Wales in the past 10 years, a publication issued by the National Office of Statistics shows. The highest number, 69, were carried out in 2002 and 2007. The number of abortions dropped to 38 in 2008, the lowest number since at least 1990. There are no figures for abortions on Maltese women carried out in other countries. The NSO publication covers data up to 2008 and follows up on a similar publication issued eight years ago.
- 09 March 2010** Turnover, investment and employment in manufacture declined year on year while wages and salaries increased, a sample survey among manufacturing enterprises in the fourth quarter last year shows. The National Statistics Office said that in the fourth quarter last year, turnover of the sampled manufacturing enterprises fell by 1.6 per cent to €506.9 million when compared to the fourth quarter of 2008.
- 09 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in parliament that power stations last year produced 2,167,640 Mwh of electricity of which 1,791,830 Mwh were actually billed. The information shows that 2,045,935 Mwh of electricity were 'sent out' and 121,705 were used in the power stations themselves. Replying to another parliamentary question, the minister said

that the electricity generated last year was lower than the last seven years. A peak of 2312071 Mwh were generated in 2008. Last year generation reached 2167640. In 2003 total generation was of 2235541 Mwh. Consumption of gasoil last year reached 77488mt, which was down from 82162 in 2008 but higher than all the other years since 2003. Consumption of heavy fuel oil, however, declined to 523486mt last year, the lowest at least since 2003.

- **09 March 2010** Interest on overdue tax refunds are costing the government €87,131 every month, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said in Parliament. He said interest was being paid at the rate of 0.75% per month, as laid down by law.
- **09 March 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said €10.7 million were spent on maintenance of Mater Dei Hospital last year.
- **10 March 2010** Exports grew by €24.6 million in January, compared to January 2009, while imports
- were down by €54.2 million, NSO figures issued show.
- **10 March 2010** Government revenue from income tax in Gozo declined to €23.2 million in 2008 from €27 million the year before but it was still more than twice that of the year 2000. The information, given in Parliament by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, shows that the drop between 2008 and 2007 was the first at least since 2000, when revenue was just €10.6 million. The figures for 2009 are still being compiled. VAT revenue from Gozo totalled €10.9 million in 2009 from €11.6 million in 2008 and just €3.9 million in the year 2000.
- **10 March 2010** The government announced a list of parliamentary assistants who will be twinned to ministries. Franco Debono will be parliamentary assistant to the Prime Minister, Frederick Azzopardi will serve in the Ministry of Gozo, Charlo Bonnici will serve at the Ministry of the Infrastructure, Philip Mifsud will be with the Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs, Stephen Spiteri at the Ministry of Education, Robert Arrigo at the Ministry of Finance, Beppe Fenech Adami at the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs and Peter Micallef at the Ministry of Health. David Agius was assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinator of the group.
- **10 March 2010** There were 229 suicides between the year 2000 and so far this year, according to information given in Parliament. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said 41 of the victims were women and three of the total number was aged under 18. The figures show that there were 33 victims last year. The previous high was 27 in 2007. There were 21 suicides in 2000; 26 in 2001; 16 in 2002; 18 in 2003; 25 in 2004; 17 in 2005; 24 in 2006; 27 in 2007 ; 18 in 2008; 33 in 2009 and four so far this year.
- **10 March 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited Medavia, an aviation company, on the occasion of their new investment. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, was also present.
- **11 March 2010** A total of 115 persons were struck off the employment register in December. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said that included 11 who were found working illegally, 83 who refused job offers, and 21 who turned down training. According to figures given by the minister in Parliament, the number of persons who started registering for work for the first time in January reached 315 while 227 persons who had been registering for work found a job during the same month.

- **11 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs went for talks in Tripoli with senior Libyan officials on the current controversy over the withholding of visas issued by Schengen area countries.
- **12 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in reply to a parliamentary question that emissions of CO2 from the Marsa power station in 2008 totalled 1,043,935 tonnes, while those from Delimara amounted to 974,650 tonnes. The combined total was 2,018,585 tonnes, compared with the 2,107,837 tonnes allowed to Malta by the European Commission in the first year of the Emissions Trading Period. Malta therefore did not make use of the mechanism to increase its allowance.
- **12 March 2010** In the 10 years between 2000 and 2009 the government's revenue in income tax and VAT totalled €264,638,504, The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in reply to a parliamentary question. The amount was made up of €187,319,246 in income tax and €77,319,258 in VAT. The figure of €11,815,995 for 2009 was incomplete because information on workers' payments under the Final Settlement System was still being collated.
- **12 March 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister said, in reply to a parliamentary question, that in the seven years between 2003 and 2009 the government received a total of 54,165 development applications. Validations amounted to 49,020 while pending applications, including those suspended or inactive, totalled 5,145.
- **12 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said in reply to a parliamentary question that the four units at the Marsa power station plant are still well within the limit. The four units have respectively been operated for 11,403, 10,585, 11,095 and 13,229 hours.
- **12 March 2010** Between 2005 and 2009 the number of children adopted in Malta and overseas was 297, The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said in reply to a parliamentary question. There were 62 adoptions in 2005, 77 in 2006, 76 in 2007, 43 in 2008 and 39 in 2009. Adoptions in Malta were respectively 23, 17, 12, none and five. The majority of the other adoptions were in Ethiopia (24, 21, 15, nine and five) and Russia (10, 29, 40, 26 and 23).
- **12 March 2010** There were a total of 6,712 vehicles scrapped in the two years 2008 and 2009 - respectively 2,694 and 4,018. The biggest numbers were of private class 1 vehicles: 1,676 in 2008 and 2,256 in 2009. The information was given by the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications in reply to a parliamentary question. In reply to another question, he said that over the same period 5,841 and 11,333 vehicles respectively had been garaged.
- **13 March 2010** Speaking during a visit to Bajada Group, The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, said part of the government's strategy was to invest in alternative energy to counter the oil prices. The company installed 99 photovoltaic panels which have made it the first company on the island to be completely powered by alternative energy.
- **13 March 2010** More than 700 people were diagnosed with glaucoma last year following screening in the six health centres. The authorities encouraged people to make an appointment for free tests at health centres to get their eyes checked. The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said 3% of over

40-year-olds suffered from glaucoma, with the number of patients expected to increase as the population aged.

- **15 March 2010** The number of Maltese going abroad in January was down by 763 compared to January 2009 and reached 17,397, the NSO said. The main decline was in travel to Italy, which was down by 523, followed by a drop of 146 in the number of travellers to Germany. Visitors to the UK increased by 420 and there was an increase of 131 in visitors to France.
- **16 March 2010** Transport Malta has granted seven permits to operators who wish to operate horse-drawn hearses, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications has said in Parliament.
- **16 March 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, visited Vella Dairy Farm at Tal-Balal, San Gwann, where €1 million have been invested on new facilities.
- **16 March 2010** Estonian Foreign Minister, Urmas Paet, called on the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. The Estonian Minister was in Malta for discussions on trade and political relations.
- **16 March 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up to 108.13 last month from 107.79 in January, the NSO said today.
- **16 March 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said that a total of 7,729 persons were found smoking in public areas where smoking was prohibited since the ban was introduced in mid-September 2004. He said the police made regular inspections to curb the abuse.
- **18 March 2010 Meat** production in the last three months of 2009 decreased by 7.3 per cent to 3,639 tonnes, the National Statistics Office said. It said that while pig and broiler-meat production declined by 12.8 and 1.5 per cent, respectively, there was an increase of five per cent in the production of beef meat.
- **18 March 2010** Nearly 1,300 elderly people last year used the handyman service offered by the Department for the Elderly and Community Care. The department said in a statement this was a 1.9% increase on the previous year.
- **19 March 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue inaugurated a new library in Cospicua, replacing that which for many years had been administered by the local's primary school. The new library will be administered by the council and the Libraries and Archives Department.
- **21 March 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, and the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, visited the Milkfest as part of the Naturalment Malti Campaign.
- **22 March 2010** The agricultural sector in the year between September 15, 2008 and September 14, 2009 extracted 19.1 million cubic metres of groundwater - some seven million cubic metres more than the Water Services Corporation. The figures were presented after a study by the National Statistics Office.
- **22 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and

Investment, said in parliament that 10,000 companies are late in the payment of water and electricity bills and owe Enemalta and the WSC €44 million.

- **23 March 2010** The Benefits Fraud Unit in the first two months of this year conducted investigations involving 101 single parents, The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said. There were 19 cases where benefits were stopped after the investigations.
- **23 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Beijing where he had talks with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. The two sides discussed ways to improve bilateral relations, including a new double taxation agreement and mutual recognition of education qualifications.
- **24 March 2010** The Malta Tourism Authority signed a key marketing support agreement with British tour operator TUI Travel UK. The company is committed to promote the destination for the next three years, with then aim of increasing tourist numbers from the UK.
- **24 March 2010** The retail price index rose by 0.37 per cent last month, primarily reflecting an increase of 6.44 per cent in the clothing and footwear index, due to seasonal price rises in garments.
- **24 March 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said in parliament that 12,300 companies are late in the submission of the income tax payments of their employees. He said that €23.1 million are owed to the government in income tax.
- **25 March 2010** Non-resident occupancy in January stood at 29.4 per cent, down by 0.4 percentage points, while resident occupancy rate was at 2.2 per cent, up by 0.3 percentage points, the NSO said. The overall occupancy rate in collective accommodation establishments (net use) amounted to 31.6 per cent, almost unchanged when compared to January last year. Last January, total arrivals in collective accommodation establishments were recorded at 49,547, an increase of 8.8 per cent over the same month last year. Total nights spent in hotels went up while total nights spent in other collective accommodation declined.
- **26 March 2010** Speaking during the launch of the annual report of the Commission for People with a Disability, the Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said that the government wants to redesign the concept behind disability benefits and consultations were to be held on how these could be reformulated. She said that benefits should not encourage people who could work to stay at home.
- **26 March 2010** The government's shortfall between recurrent revenue and expenditure improved from €199.5 million last year to €154.8 million in the first two months of this year. The NSO said that according to data obtained from the government's consolidated fund there was an increase in recurrent revenue of €33.4 million and a drop in total expenditure of €11.4 million in the first two months of this year, lowering the government deficit to €154.8 million. During the period under review, recurrent revenue was recorded at €291.9 million.
- **26 March 2010** The State of the Environment Report 2008 was issued. The report shows that Mepa in 2008 alone issued 4,000 more permits for housing units than the annual household needs and that Malta in 2008 had 50,000 vacant housing units, a third of all buildings. Their value was equivalent to a third of the total savings in the country.

The report also shows that the level of nitrogen oxide in the air has increased - albeit not to dangerous levels - mainly because of traffic and especially because the number of registered cars increased 8.7 percent between 2004 and 2008. However, the level of benzene in the air dropped, as more vehicles used cleaner fuel.

- **26 March 2010** According to figures released in Parliament, the total value of tickets issued by the police and the Malta Transport Authority (ADT) was €2,842,792 but €1,432,011 have been paid up so far. The amount does not include tickets issued by local wardens.
- **27 March 2010** The lights were switched off for an hour in the evening at Portes des Bombes, the Mdina Bastions, St George's Square and the bastions in Victoria as Malta joined 126 nations in marking Earth Hour. The purpose of the initiative was to raise awareness on energy conservation. Instead of electricity, the bastions at Victoria were lit with torches. Several hotels also switched off the lighting of parts of their facades. They also encouraged their guests to make a contribution to the 34U campaign, the Resources Ministry said. The Earth Hour initiative was launched in Sydney three years ago. Some 6,000 cities now take part.
- **27 March 2010** Valletta celebrated the anniversary of its founding. Grand Master Jean de Valette laid the foundation stone of the city which bears his name on March 28, 1566 at what became Our Lady of Victories church, recalling the victory over the Turks in the Great Siege a few months previously. Flowers were laid at the spot this morning by a delegation led by the Mayor of Valletta. The festivities started with a march down part of Republic Street and up Merchants' Street by the Wallace Pipes and Drums. Several stands related to history and handicrafts were put up in Great Siege Square and St George's Square. A colourful historical re-enactment of a parade of the time of the knights - In Guardia - was staged at St George's Square. Mass was held at Our Lady of Victories Church after the laying of flowers.
- **28 March 2010** Malta has seen a sharp increase in cases of scarlet fever, which almost tripled between 2008 and last year. Figures from the Disease Surveillance Unit show there were 100 cases of scarlet fever last year, a jump from the 37 registered in 2008, and a surge from the eight cases in the previous 11 years.
- **29 March 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, inaugurated The Point Shopping Mall, Tigne' Sliema.
- **29 March 2010** Demand for Maltese manufactured products was badly hit by the global recession last year, according to figures published by the EU's statistics office. Eurostat said Malta suffered one of the biggest drops in exports compared to the other 26 member states. However, exports in the EU dropped across the board, with all member states suffering a decline when compared to the previous year. During 2009, Malta exported almost €0.5 billion less than it did in 2008, a drop of 25 per cent. This put the island in the third worst position in the EU.
- **30 March 2010** The general government financial deficit for the whole of last year reached €297 million, an increase of €63.9m, the NSO said today. It said recurrent revenue increased by €68.6 million but total expenditure rose by €132.5 million, resulting in a deficit between recurrent revenue and total expenditure of €297.0 million.
- **30 March 2010** The Ministry of Education in association with local councils launched a three-month campaign to encourage people to make greater use of the National Public Library and lending libraries. The Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education,

Culture, Youth and Sport, said that just 5,000 people went to the national library last year, and most of them were foreigners.

- **31 March 2010** The Malta Community Chest Fund announced the organisations which will benefit from the proceeds of Istrina 2009. H.E. the President George Abela, said the event had been a success and 27 beneficiaries had been selected on the basis of the help they needed and the projects which they had proposed. €2.3 million had been raised in the Boxing Day event.
- **31 March 2010** The Australian High Commissioner H.E. Ms Anne Marie Quinane, planted trees at Ta' Qali BOV Adventure Park, in the presence of the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs.
- **31 March 2010** H.E. the President George Abela, and the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, attended the wreath laying ceremony on the occasion of Freedom Day.

APRIL

- **01 April 2010** A total of 70.8 mm of rain fell last month, which was higher than the climate norm for March by 29.8 mm., the Met Office at MIA said. There were 10 rainy days; the wettest day was the 7th with a total of 43.6 mm, followed by the 12th with 4.8 mm. The highest March rainfall on record occurred in 1925 with a total of 178.0 mm, while the driest one was that of 1977 with just 0.40 mm.
- **01 April 2010** A total of 11,369 cruise passengers came to Malta in February, a drop of 19.8 per cent over the same month in 2009.
- **01 April 2010** Tariffs for private industry waste dumping and other waste generating entities increased to encourage separation, the Resources and Rural Affairs Ministry said. In a statement, the ministry said that the new tariffs include a 20 euro increase for each tonne of waste going into the engineered landfill, as well as a reduction to 50c for each tonne of separated waste taken to Sant'Antnin Waste Recycling Plant. Domestic waste which can be taken to a Civic Amenity Site can still be taken to these centres free of charge.
- **01 April 2010** A total of 11,369 cruise passengers came to Malta in February, a drop of 19.8 per cent over the same month in 2009. Passengers from EU countries accounted for 59.5 per cent of total traffic, with Germany being the main market. Moreover, same-day visitors from non-EU markets stood at 4,603, of which 64.5 per cent were from the United States.
- **04 April 2010** H.E. The President and Mrs Abela attended Easter mass animated by H.G. the Archbishop, Mons Paul Cremona.
- **05 April 2010** Tourist arrivals increased by 3.6 per cent in February. Figures issued by NSO show that Malta welcomed 53,074 visitors in February an increase of 3.6 per cent when compared to the corresponding month last year. During the same period, total nights spent were estimated at 424,478.
- **05 April 2010** March was wetter than usual this year, when nearly 30 mm more rainfall over the average for the month. The Met Office said 70.8 mm of rain fell at Malta International Airport last month, 29.8 mm more than the norm. Ten rainy days were recorded. The highest March rainfall on record occurred in 1925 with a total of 178

mm and the driest one was in 1977 with just 0.4 mm of rain. The mean temperature, standing at 13.8°C, was 0.4°C above the norm. The highest temperature recorded last month was 23.9°C, on March 1. The sea temperature averaged 15.5°C, that is, 0.5°C warmer than usual.

- **06 April 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Montenegro for talks with Foreign Minister Milan Roehen on bilateral and EU affairs.
- **06 April 2010** The sheep population in Malta increased by 0.4 per cent last year while that of goats declined by 5.9 per cent over 2008, the NSO said. In December, the sheep population amounted to 12,889 heads. Lambs and ewe lambs registered a decline of 31.5 per cent and 35 per cent respectively, while ewes and male sheep added 9.6 per cent and 19.6 per cent respectively over the previous year.
- **07 April 2010** Government spending on social benefits rose by €37 million last year to reach €661.9 million, figures issued by NSO show. In 2009 the outlay on social security benefits made up 11.6 per cent of GDP at current market prices, an increase of 0.6 percentage points over 2008. The NSO said that the increase in Contributory Benefits was essentially the result of a €25.5 million growth in retirement pensions which amounted to €319.5 million.
- **07 April 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, inaugurated an exhibition by Mr Christopher Saliba, at Auberge de Castille. The exhibition explores how Malta's identity was forged by St Paul. The exhibition was put up to mark the Pope's visit to Malta and features some of the earliest references to St Paul and Malta. Among the exhibits were 400-year-old sculptures brought over from Florence and antique silver items.
- **08 April 2010** Malta had the second highest increase in retail trade in February, according to figures issued by Eurostat. The EU statistics office said that the volume of retail trade was down by 0.6% in the euro area and stable in the EU27. Among the Member States for which data was available, total retail trade fell in 13 and rose in seven countries. The largest decreases were observed in Portugal (-3.4%), Estonia (-2.3%) and Slovenia (-1.7%), and the highest increases in the United Kingdom (+2.2%), Malta (+0.9%) and France (+0.6%).
- **09 April 2010** The Malta Environment & Planning Authority signed an agreement with 15 local councils and the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, to fully or partially fund 21 projects that will help improve the quality of life for residents living in these localities.
- **09 April 2010** The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs visited works-in-progress on the upgrading of Mosta Parish Church parvis parapet wall.
- **09 April 2010** The government announced the new spring hunting season.
- **09 April 2010** The visible trade gap narrowed by €20.1 million in February when compared to February last year, according to preliminary figures published by the National Statistics Office. Provisional data for international trade show that the visible trade gap in February 2010 at €71.7 million, down by €20.1 million when compared to the corresponding month in 2009. There were increases in imports and exports of €33.6 million and €53.9 million respectively.
- **09 April 2010** Social security spending increased by €37 million last year over the previous one, bringing the total for 2009 up to €661.8 million. The total represents

11.6% of Malta's gross domestic product, a 0.6% increase over 2008, according to the NSO. The increase was mostly the result of a €33.1 million increase in contributory benefit spending, of which €25.5 million were increases in retirement pension payouts. Overall, in fact, at €319.5 million, retirement pensions accounted for almost half of the spending on social security. The children's allowance declined by €1.2 million, invalidity pension declined by €3.3 million while benefits related to industrial injuries declined by €200,000.

- **10 April 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister officially opened the second edition of "Medieval Mdina festival - Flowers and Pageantry". The festival was organised by Imdina local council, who benefited from the cultural activities funds scheme.
- **11 April 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, lead a delegation to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. The delegation, which included Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and Finance Minister Tonio Fenech, had political and commercial meetings and was made up of more than 30 people, including businessmen and representatives of government agencies and constituted bodies.
- **12 April 2010** Malta and Bahrain signed a double taxation avoidance agreement during the Prime Minister's tour of Gulf States.
- **13 April 2010** A total of 17,426 Maltese went abroad in February, 11.9% more than in the same month last year. The NSO said there were also 1,397 same-day visitors. Visitors to EU destinations numbered 15,060 - 1,677 trips more than last year. A further 2,366 trips headed towards non-EU destinations.
- **15 April 2010** More people and cars crossed between Malta and Gozo in the first quarter this year, in spite of a decrease in the number of trips. The National Statistics Office said commuters increased by 3.4 per cent, totalling 735,123 when compared to the corresponding period in 2009. Vehicles carried by scheduled vessels went up by 2.1 per cent, to 224,559. The NSO said that, as expected, March saw the highest number of commuters and vehicles - 288,375 and 82,20, respectively. The number of trips in the quarter under review stood at 4,586, a decrease of 1.4 per cent over the corresponding period last year. The highest number of trips was recorded in March - 1,588 or 34.6 per cent of the total for the period under review.
- **16 April 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up by 1.4 per cent in March compared to February, the National Statistics Office said.
- **17 April 2010** H.H. the Pope, Benedict XVI arrived in Malta at 17.00 hrs. During a welcome ceremony at Malta International Airport, H.E. George Abela, President of the Republic delivered a welcome speech. Following was a speech by H.H. the Pope. Later in the evening, H.H. the Pope made a courtesy call on the President of the Republic and had meetings with top government officials. H.H. greeted the public from the Balcony of the President's Palace. After, H.H. the Pope headed to St. Paul's Church in Rabat where he had a meeting with Maltese missionaries and visited St. Paul's Grotto.
- **18 April 2010** H.H. the Pope arrived at the Granaries, Floriana, where he concelebrated a mass. In the afternoon, H.H. the Pope arrived at Kalkara Wharf and departed to Valletta Waterfront on the Catamaran. There he met with youths. In the evening, H.H. the Pope arrived at Malta International Airport and a departure ceremony took place. A departure speech was delivered by H.E. George Abela, President of the Republic and also by H.H. Pope Benedict XVI.

- **19 April 2010** There were 300,308 licensed motor vehicles in the Maltese islands in the first three months of this year. The National Statistics Office said 76.4 per cent were private vehicles, with commercial vehicles accounting for 15.8 per cent.
- **20 April 2010** There were 133 multiple births in Malta last year, including 11 instances where assisted reproduction therapy was used, the Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **20 April 2010** There were six traffic fatalities in the first three months of this year. The National Statistics Office said that in the first quarter, the number of reported traffic accidents reached 3,302, a decrease of 100 cases or 2.9 per cent over the corresponding quarter last year.
- **20 April 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, said in reply to parliamentary questions, that the use of photovoltaic cells led to a saving of €7 million annually in the demand for electricity supply. This was one of the renewable energy schemes launched by the government through EU funds and taxation.
- **21 April 2010** While addressing the International Ministerial Conference on Animal and Pandemic Influenza: 'The Way Forward', the Hon Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care, emphasised the need to set up a special fund to cater for countries that do not have the means to prepare and equip themselves for a possible pandemic. The conference, hosted by the Government of Vietnam, in Hanoi, was the seventh, in a series of inter-ministerial conferences that have taken place since 2004.
- **21 April 2010** The Malta Financial Services Authority registered 5,544 new companies over the last two years - 2,800 in 2008 and 2,744 in 2009 - and there was a one per cent increase in the deposits in the Maltese banking sector last year to €14.6 billion.
- **22 April 2010** The air traffic chaos caused by the ash cloud from the Icelandic volcano meant that tourist arrivals declined by some 13,000 over the same period last year, the Secretariat for Tourism said. It said that 336 flights to and from Malta were cancelled. 91,000 bed nights were lost.
- **22 April 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited Merchants Street. The Prime Minister was invited to visit the shops by the Merchants Street Business Association. Association president Tonio Camilleri said 23 shops had opened in the street in the past two years and several owners had invested to upgrade their outlets.
- **22 April 2010** The government deficit last year estimated at €218.2 million, or 3.8 per cent of GDP, down from €254.8 million in 2008, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said that at the end of 2009, the government's nominal gross consolidated debt amounted to €3,947.6 million, or 69.1 per cent of GDP; compared to €3,626.6 million, or 63.7 per cent of GDP for 2008.
- **22 April 2010** The construction industry in Malta and Gozo generates €145 million annually or 3.4% of the GDP, employing 12,370 people on full-time basis, or eight% of those gainfully occupied. Introducing the second reading of the Building Regulation Bill, the Hon. Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs quoted NSO statistics which showed that the sector was still expanding and its activity had increased by 6% over the last five years. Over the same period, the average investment in the sector had varied from €7 million to €1,000 million.
- **22 April 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister Of Education, Employment and the Family, said that between January 1, 2010 and

March 24, there were 385 cases of single, unmarried parents being refused relief. Of these, 221 had their Children's Allowance rate dwindle to €4.81 per week.

- **23 April 2010** The Retail Price Index went up to 100.43 in Malta from 99.86 in February, the National Statistics Office said.
- **24 April 2010** An open day at Maghtab was held. Visitors could see the waste management facilities at the former dump. Vans took people around and were shown the facility used to collect gases from the waste buried in the dump, the current procedures for waste disposal, and an exhibition of plans on how the site is to be turned into a leisure area.
- **25 April 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited the 6th edition of the Puffinu Cares Football Marathon. The marathon was held at the Marsa sports grounds and included entertainment and activities for people of all ages.
- **25 April 2010** The Hon Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, presided over the devolution of the Clock Tower Mtarfa, to Mtarfa Local Council. The Hon Chris Said Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Local Councils also attended. The Mtarfa clock tower was built in 1895 by the British military forces. Parliamentary Secretary Jason Azzopardi said the devolution of such properties enabled local councils to better maintain them and use them in the interest of their localities.
- **25 April 2010** The President and Mrs Abela attended the ANZAC Day Wreath Laying Ceremony. Anzac Day was commemorated at Pietà Military Cemetery in memory of the fallen, 95 years after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula, suffering heavy losses.
- **26 April 2010** Seventy-one prison inmates have, since 2007, been allowed to work or follow courses outside the prisons, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in Parliament. He said that 38 had been given a permit to work outside the prisons. 13 permits were issued in 2007, 15 in 2008, nine last year and one this year up to March. 33 permits were issued for prisoners to follow courses outside the prisons - six in 2007, five in 2008, 16 last year and six this year. There is a total of 583 prisoners - 541 men and 42 women.
- **26 April 2010** A total of 25,533 passengers came to Malta aboard 10 cruise liners last March, an increase of 20,480 passengers from March last year, when only three ships had called, the NSO said. Passengers from EU countries made up for 78.9 per cent of the total traffic last month.
- **27 April 2010** The police in the first three months of this year arraigned 49 people on drink-driving charges, compared to 84 for the whole of last year. The Home Affairs Ministry said that 92 drink-drive arraignments were made in 2008 and 108 in 2007.
- **27 April 2010** Occupancy in hotels and other tourist accommodation rose by 1.3% to 65,946 in February when compared to the same month last year. However, the number of guest nights were down to 369,962, 4.5% less than in February last year. The National Statistics Office said an increase in non-residents was partly offset by a decline in resident arrivals.
- **27 April 2010** Ten cruise liners called at Valletta's Grand Harbour last month, carrying 25,533 passengers, more than five times the number who visited in the previous March. The National Statistics Office said it was an increase of 20,480 passengers over March 2009, attributed to the fact that seven more cruise liners called.

Passengers from EU countries accounted for 78.9 per cent of total traffic, with Italians and Germans making up most of these arrivals.

- **27 April 2010** The President and Mrs Abela left for China where they will attend the Shanghai International Expo.
- **28 April 2010** Tourist arrivals grew by 7.2% in March. Figures issued by the National Statistics Office show that 76,436 tourists came to Malta last month, an increase of 7.4% when compared to the corresponding month last year. During the same period, total nights spent were estimated at 631,155.
- **29 April 2010** The ninth 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 sixth anniversary of Malta's EU membership.
- **29 April 2010** Michael Frendo was unanimously elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in a special parliamentary sitting. He was nominated to the post by H.E. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, and seconded by Opposition leader Dr Joseph Muscat. Mr Karl Gouder was co-opted to succeed him a member of parliament.
- **29 April 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, and Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab (WHO Regional Director for Europe) addressed the National Strategy on Non-communicable Diseases Conference. The minister said non-communicable diseases accounted for 82% of total deaths every year, of which the biggest proportion were heart diseases. Other non-communicable diseases include cancer, high blood pressure and mental health issues.
- **30 April 2010** H.E. The President George Abela was admitted to Ruijin Hospital after sustaining an incomplete fracture of his second lumbar transverse process, combined with bruising in his left chest and the soft tissue of his waist. He was kept in hospital for further observation and treatment. The President cancelled his presence at the official inauguration of the Shanghai Expo 2010.
- **30 April 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister delivered opening speech during the Finance Malta 3rd Annual Conference.

May

- **01 May 2010** April was drier and warmer than normal, with a mean temperature of 17.0 °C, or 1.5 °C higher than the climate norm, the MIA Met office said. There were only four days during which the mean average temperature was below the climate norm - from 4th till the 7th of April. The warmest day last month was the 26th, when the thermometer at the Meteorological Office site at Malta International Airport reached 24.0 °C. The warmest April day ever recorded in Malta was in 1985 when a highest temperature of 30.7 °C was reached on the 9th. The lowest minimum temperature last month was 11.2 °C and this was recorded on 4th. The coolest April night ever recorded in Malta was that of the 10th April 1956 with a low of 4.4 °C.
- **01 May 2010** Tourist arrivals increased by 7.2% in March. Figures issued by the National Statistics Office showed that 76,436 tourists came to Malta in March, an increase of 7.4% when compared to the same month last year. The latest official data showed that 57,225 tourists visited Malta for a holiday, the majority of them from the EU. First-

time visitors made up 63% of the tourists while repeat visitors increased by 17%. The average length of stay stood at 8.3 nights, up slightly on March 2009.

- **03 May 2010** Unemployment in March decreased by 296 when compared to the previous month, but increased by 473 when compared to March last year, National Statistics Office figures show. In March, the number of registered unemployed stood at 7,556, of whom 778 were in Gozo. In the 12 months to March 2010, unemployment rose in the island of Malta by 477 persons as compared to a drop of four persons in Gozo, the National Statistics Office said.
- **03 May 2010** H.E. The President George Abela and his delegation left China on their way back to Malta in an air ambulance after Dr Abela injured his back in a fall on 30th April. The President was in China for the opening of the World Expo in Shanghai but cancelled his engagements due to the incident. The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended instead.
- **03 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited H.E. The President George Abela at Mater Dei Hospital.
- **04 May 2010** There was an increase in employment in the last three months of 2009, when compared with the same period in the previous year. The National Statistics Office said that according to For Labour Force Survey estimates, the number of employed during the period was estimated at 162,918 (46.4%), that of unemployed at 13,022 (3.7%), and the number of inactive people at 175,007 (49.9%).
- **04 May 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, launched a €20 million life sciences park aimed at National Statistics Office dating and boosting Malta's research and innovation capacity. The park is to be built on the site of the Malta Enterprise offices and the former VF and Yorkie factories in San Gwann industrial estate.
- **04 May 2010** A total of 106 persons have ended up in prison for breaking the VAT law since 2004, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **04 May 2010** 195 persons have been taken to court since 2006 and accused of corruption of minors, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in parliament. Last year 60 people were charged and 20 convicted. The remaining cases are still before the courts. In 2008 there were 42 arraignments and 20 convictions.
- **04 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, closed the conference "The elderly: An asset not a liability", organised by the European Senior Citizens Union. The Prime Minister said that the elderly were an asset and that there needs to be policies in place to allow elderly people to keep contributing. He said there were three dimensions to accessibility - physical, intellectual and opportunity based.
- **05 May 2010** H.E. The President, George Abela resumed the functions of the Office of the President, despite being bed-ridden at Mater Dei Hospital following the back injury he suffered on Friday in Shanghai.
- **05 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, said that the government issued the fourth call for applications for scholarships under the Strategic Educational Pathways Scholarships (STEPS) scheme. The call marks an investment of €3,000,000 to support around 180 students in their Masters and Doctorate degrees.

- **07 May 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had talks in Paris with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner. The two ministers discussed investment, illegal immigration and cooperation in education and culture.
- **07 May 2010** Imports and exports grew by €24.3 million and €27.2 million respectively, in March when compared to March 2009, the National Statistics Office reported. The increase in imports was mainly due to industrial supplies. Other increases were registered in fuels and lubricants and consumer goods, while a decrease was registered in capital goods.
- **07 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, said in reply to a parliamentary question, that between 2008 and 2009 the Department of Labour and Industrial Relations carried out 2,870 inspections and found 5,448 irregularities, 5,093 of which, were resolved through the department's initiative. He said there were also 657 complaints following termination of employment, 325 of which were resolved between the two parties. During the past 24 months, criminal proceedings were taken against 139 employers in 2008 and 235 in 2009 for breaching employment conditions.
- **07 May 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said in reply to a parliamentary question, that 728 companies and self-employed persons, employing less than 10 persons had applied for Malta Enterprise schemes since 2008. He said that, of these, 256 applied for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) schemes. An additional 2,081 persons benefitted from the My Potential scheme, targeted at individuals who want to further their studies.
- **08 May 2010** H.E, the President, George Abela, was discharged from Mater Dei hospital and returned to his residence at San Anton.
- **10 May 2010** A Palestinian business delegation was on a visit to Malta for a series of meetings with the Maltese business sector. The delegation, whose visit was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Malta Representative Office in Ramallah, and Malta Enterprise, was made up of seven companies exclusively from the ICT sector.
- **10 May 2010** 706 car owners are owed a total of €1.23 million in refunds on the balance of the registration tax they paid in 2008, in view of amendments to the law. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, explained in Parliament that all those who registered their vehicle in 2008 were entitled to a refund. A total of 706 motorists had applied for a refund up to March 19, 2010.
- **11 May 2010** The Ambassador of the Republic of Malta, Mr Pierre Clive Agius, met with the Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Mr Kunio Mikuriya to deposit the instrument of accession of Malta to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (revised Kyoto Convention) with the World Customs Organization.
- **12 May 2010** Outbound tourism in March surged by 18.4% in March when compared to March last year. Figures issued by the National Statistics Office show that 22,674 went abroad in March, of whom 19,145 went to EU destinations, an increase of 2,473 trips.
- **13 May 2010** The Lotteries and Gaming Authority over the past year terminated 30 gaming licences, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance and Economic Development said. He said that Malta was now home to more than 250 remote gaming companies, holding over 350 licences.

- **13 May 2010** The full-time gainfully occupied population in November totalled 144,265, down by 1,564 when compared to the same month last year and up by 171 over the previous month. The National Statistics Office said that according to Employment and Training Corporation records, the number of registered unemployed increased by 988, with a resulting drop of 576 in the labour supply with respect to 2008. In this way, the labour supply amounted to 151,853, while the registered unemployed totalled 7,588.
- **14 May 2010** The number of mobile telephone subscriptions went up by 10%. At the end of 2009, the figure stood at 422,083, a penetration rate of 102.1%, up from 93.2% at the end of 2008, the Malta Communications Authority said.
- **15 May 2010** In 2007 and 2008 a total of 169,881 foreign students visited Malta to study the English language, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, said in reply to a parliamentary question.
- **17 May 2010** Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi was in Spain for the sixth summit of heads of government from the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean. He was accompanied by Richard Cachia Caruana, Malta's permanent representative to the EU, and Leonard Callus, deputy head of his secretariat.
- **18 May 2010** The index of consumer prices jumped to 112.40 in April from 109.60 in March, the National Statistics Office said.
- **18 May 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed two agreements with Egyptian counterpart, Ahmed Aboul Gheit during an official two-day visit in Cairo. During his visit, Dr Borg also met Egyptian Prime Minister, Dr Ahmed Nazif and Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Amr Moussa.
- **19 May 2010** Accidents at the place of work in the first quarter of this year dropped by 3.4% compared to the same period last year. The National Statistics Office said that 771 non-fatal claims of occupational accidents were made between January and March. There was also one fatality this year, compared to three last year.
- **20 May 2010** Former Parliamentary Secretary Helen D'Amato was appointed Children's Commissioner for a three-year term.
- **20 May 2010** Cruise liner traffic in April amounted to 56,192 passengers, up by 48.1% compared to last year. There were 33 cruise liner calls, the National Statistics Office said. The NSO said that the number of transit passengers stood at 53,834 and made up 95.8% of the total.
- **21 May 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed two agreements with Georgia during an official visit to Malta by his Georgian counterpart Gregory Vashadze. The agreements, signed at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, cover a memorandum of understanding on bilateral consultations between the two ministries, and an agreement between the two governments on cooperation in education, science and culture.
- **22 May 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care attended an event held to raise awareness on obesity and its health-related risks, and encourage a healthier lifestyle. Representatives of The Malta Heart Foundation, The Malta Exercise Health and Fitness Association (MEHFA), the Diabetes Association and GlaxoSmithKline marked the first European Obesity Day (EOD) with a walk down Republic Street and an exercise session in St George's Square.

- **23 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, and the Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy, inaugurated a €9.2 million extension with four new wards at St. Vincent de Paule Home for the Elderly.
- **24 May 2010** The Retail Price Index went up to 101.44 from 100.43 in April, the National Statistics Office said. This primarily reflected an increase of 3.72% in the Clothing and Footwear Index, mainly due to seasonal price rises in garments.
- **25 May 2010** An agreement was signed between the Health Ministry and St James' Hospital so that cancer patients whose consultant recommends a Positron Emission Tomography will be able to start getting this from St James' Hospital free of charge. The Minister said that the PET Scan permits the specialist to see changes in the body's formation as a result of several conditions, including breast, lung and colorectal cancer, lymphoma melanoma and skin cancer.
- **25 May 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister of Health, the Elderly and Community Care, inaugurated the statue of Mater Dei in front of Mater Dei Hospital, which statue was blessed by H.G. the Archbishop, Mons Paul Cremona.
- **26 May 2010** A total of 169 cases of domestic violence were reported to the police in the first four months of this year. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said in parliament 10 of the cases were in Gozo. He said that during the same four months, the police received 58 reports of criminal violence on children, including one case in Gozo. There were also 65 reports of violence against elderly persons. Two were in Gozo.
- **26 May 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, launched the Prostate Cancer Awareness Campaign organised by the Department of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, with the collaboration of St. James Hospital.
- **26 May 2010** Meat production dropped by 3.7% and producer value by 4% in the first quarter this year, when compared to the same period in 2009. The National Statistics Office said that meat production decreased to 3,205 tonnes. An increase of 17.8% in the production of beef was mitigated by declines of 4.8 and 8.9% in pig meat and broiler meat, respectively.
- **28 May 2010** The taxis reform, which focuses on the liberalisation of the sector, was launched by the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications.
- **28 May 2010** The shortfall between the government's recurrent revenue and total expenditure improved by €39.8 million to €196 million in the first four months of this year, when compared to the corresponding period last year. The National Statistics Office said that the reduction in government deficit by 16.9% was brought about by a rise in recurrent revenue of €25.2 million together with a drop in expenditure of €14.5 million.
- **29 May 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited the MCAST open weekend at MCAST Agribusiness. The Hon George Pullicino Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs was also in attendance.

- **29 May 2010** The Hon George Pullicino Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs visited the fields of the Mgarr Farmers Cooperative whilst preparations were underway for the Festa Frott u Hxejjex at Zebbiegh.
- **31 May 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care addressed a press conference on World No Tobacco Day, and presented certificates to participants of smoke cessation courses.

June

- **01 June 2010** The Meteorological Office said in a statement that a total of 11.8mm of rainfall was registered last month, almost twice the average amount of rainfall for May. The highest amount of rainfall ever recorded for May was in 1976 with a total of 49.1 mm.
- **01 June 2010** The average bed occupancy at Mater Dei Hospital in the first four months of 2010 ranged between 93% and 95%, the Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said in reply to a parliamentary question. In the same period, a total of 126 patients were placed in other wards. The Minister also said that there were 724 cases diagnosed as "respiratory diseases" between January and April. By far the majority of the patients came from around the harbour area: 204 from the southern harbour area, 235 from the northern harbour, 98 from the southeast, 87 from the west, 99 from the north and one from Gozo and Comino.
- **02 June 2010** The Hon. Censu Galea was appointed Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. The former minister, who has been an MP for 23 years, succeeds Labour MP Carmelo Abela.
- **02 June 2010** Unemployment in April reached 7,606, an increase of 396 when compared to the corresponding month last year, and up by 50 over March this year. The National Statistics Office said that in Malta alone, registered unemployed totalled 6,852, whereas in Gozo the registered unemployed amounted to 754. In the 12 months to April 2010, unemployment rose in mainland Malta, with an increase of 425 registered unemployed, compared to a drop of 29 persons in Gozo.
- **02 June 2010** The two thunderstorms occurring near the end of last month made May almost twice as wet as the norm, according to the Meteorological Office. May had a slightly warmer average temperature, although a lower than average spell between May 15 and 25.
- **03 June 2010** Italian company Palumbo formally took over the dockyard. A privatisation deal was signed between the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, and Antonio Palumbo, Managing Director of the company.
- **03 June 2010** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport grew by 19.55 last month compared to May last year. Passenger movements for the first five months of this year, compared to the same period last year, have registered an increase of 7.7%. In a statement, MIA said that 307,292 passengers used MIA in May and 1,049,580 in the first five months of this year.

- **03 June 2010** As at the end of March, subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased when compared to the corresponding period in 2009, the National Statistics Office said.
- **04 June 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, inaugurated Roseville, the new CareMalta Home for the Elderly in H'Attard.
- **04 June 2010** The Hon George Pullicino Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, together with the Hon Mario De Marco Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Environment and Culture, launched the 'Adopt-a-Turtle' campaign. The campaign will aid in raising awareness on the different species of turtles on the brink of extinction.
- **06 June 2010** The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, launched the project of cleaning of valleys in Gozo.
- **07 June 2010** Malta commemorated the 7 June 1919 bread riots. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Michael Frendo, the Prime Minister, the Hon Lawrence Gonzi and the leader of the Opposition, the Hon Joseph Muscat, laid wreaths at the foot of the Sette Giugno Monument.
- **08 June 2010** Exports grew by €49 million April compared to the same month in 2009, while imports were down by €15 million, according to National Statistics Office figures issued today. The visible trade gap in April stood at €68.9 million, down by €64.0 million when compared to the corresponding month in 2009.
- **09 June 2010** The Gross Domestic Product for the first three months of this year amounted to €1,416.9 million, an increase of 7% over the corresponding period last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that in real terms, GDP increased by 3.4%.
- **10 June 2010** A total of 34 cruise liners called in Valletta last month, carrying 52,951 passengers, terminal operator Viset said. It said in a statement this was an increase of around 22,007 passengers, 41.56% over May last year.
- **10 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and Mrs Catherine Gonzi visited Palazzo Parisio. Following a restoration programme, the Palazzo has been restored to its original splendour. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of heritage and the role of localities in Malta's tourism product.
- **10 June 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister of Health, the Elderly and Community Care addressed a Press Conference and presided over the signing of an agreement with the Swiss Government on the procurement and installation of a PET Scan at Mater Dei Hospital.
- **11 June 2010** Malta and Bosnia signed an agreement on the readmission of persons between the two countries. The agreement was signed by the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and H.E. Sven Alkalaj, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina who was in Malta on a two day visit. The two ministers discussed a double taxation agreement and an Investment Guarantee Agreement to boost business exchanges.
- **11 June 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said that twenty four Maltese patients are receiving treatment in ten United Kingdom hospitals.

- **11 June 2010** Between October 2009 and March 2010 there were a total of 2,090 heart surgeries performed at Mater Dei Hospital, the Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said in reply to a parliamentary question. The surgeries included coronary angiograms, percutaneous coronary interventions, coronary artery bypasses and valve replacements. The greatest number of surgeries performed in any month, 409, had been in March.
- **12 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited the PowerBoats P1.
- **13 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister visited Libya, where he had a meeting with President Gaddafi in Tripoli.
- **15 June 2010** Average full-time employment last year stood at 144,776 whereas total part-time employment in the same period was 48,967, the National Statistics Office said. According to revised monthly figures of the gainfully-occupied population for 2008 and 2009, provided by the Employment and Training Corporation, the gainfully-occupied population decreased by 677 or 0.5%. Registered unemployed increased by 1,127, or 18.2%, the National Statistics Office said. The resulting labour supply increased by 450 or 0.3%.
- **16 June 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up 1.2% to 113.72 in May from 112.40 in April. The National Statistics Office said this primarily reflected an increase of 6.3% in the restaurants and hotels index, mainly due to a seasonal increase in the price for accommodation services.
- **16 June 2010** The Hon Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, launched the Malta Tourism Authority Tourist Information Office at VISET. The Authority said that some 900 tourists a day sought information from its offices every day. The Authority has offices in Valletta, the airport, Victoria, Mdina and Mellieha.
- **16 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister participated at the EPP Summit and the European Council in Brussels.
- **16 June 2010** The book 'At Home with the President', in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund, was launched at the Palace, Valletta. The book takes an unusual look at the three Presidential palaces of Valletta, San Anton and Verdala. H.E. the President, Dr George Abela, has written the foreword for the book.
- **17 June 2010** Malta and Germany agreed to include a new protocol in the double taxation agreement to enhance transparency in the exchange of information. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that the aim of the protocol was to combat tax avoidance and evasion in line with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recommendations.
- **18 June 2010** Twenty-five people died from a drug overdose in the past three years, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, said while speaking during the inauguration of a new detox centre at the Sedqa premises in Hal Farrug.
- **18 June 2010** A total of 1,475 irregular immigrants arrived in Malta on 17 boats last year, according to data provided by the National Statistics Office. In a statement issued on the occasion of World Refugee Day, being celebrated worldwide on 20th June, the National Statistics Office said that new applications for asylum amounted to 2,387, down by 8.5% when compared to 2008.

- **19 June 2010** Hundreds of people packed the President's private gardens at San Anton Palace during Gonna Mdawla, an event held to raise funds for the Community Chest Fund. It was the first time that all sections of the gardens were opened. They were lit up with coloured lights and fjakkoli while the kitchen served Maltese dishes. The President and Mrs Abela joined the crowd.
- **21 June 2010** Unemployment in May decreased by 214 persons when compared to the corresponding month last year, and by 554 compared to April. The National Statistics Office said today that the number of registered unemployed stood at 7,052 in May. In Malta, registered unemployment totalled 6,338, whereas in Gozo it stood at 714.
- **22 June 2010** Sixteen local charitable organisations received more than €250,000 to carry out projects in poor countries. Cheques were presented by the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to representatives of organisations which are carrying out humanitarian projects in Africa, Asia and South America. The Minister explained that Malta's overseas development aid was administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said that Malta wanted to see developing countries achieve economic and social progress and provided assistance on the basis of "fighting poverty through development".
- **22 June 2010** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.17% in May to reach 101.61, the National Statistics Office said. This primarily reflected an increase of 2.06% in the clothing and footwear Index, mainly due to seasonal price rises in garments.
- **22 June 2010** Con.Nexo', an Italian IT consultancy firm, has relocated its head office operations from Italy to Malta, employing 20 people. The new offices were officially inaugurated by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, who said that the company's presence fitted into the government's Vision 2015 targets of creating jobs that offered value-added and opportunities for advancement.
- **23 June 2010** Information given in parliament showed that there are 7,441 foreigners with a permit to work in Malta, of whom 2,277 are from non-EU countries and 889 are refugees or people granted humanitarian protection. 1704, are listed as having elementary occupations, 1,405 are service and sales workers and 1,284 are senior officials and managers. There are 853 who are technicians and associate professionals.
- **23 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, officially opened the Malta Trade Fair 2010.
- **24 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, inaugurated Valletta Living History at the Embassy Cinemas, an audiovisual spectacular on Valletta's rich history, offering tourists and locals alike the opportunity to gain an insight into the history of the Capital, in half an hour.
- **24 June 2010** Hotel guests in April increased by 5.3% compared to the same month in 2009 to reach 103,658, the NSO said. The average length of stay stood at 5.4 nights.
- **24 June 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, had talks in Tunis with Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali and Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane. The minister was in Tunisia for a meeting of a Mixed Commission between the two countries which discussed a range of issues. The Ministers signed cooperation agreements on health and agriculture.

- **25 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister inaugurated the MCM aviation maintenance facilities in Luqa.
- **25 June 2010** The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, visited works in progress on the demolition of the ex -Oil Depot. The demolition revealed a section of the Vittoriosa bastions that was hidden for almost a hundred years.
- **25 June 2010** Israeli's Foreign Minister, Mr Avigdor Lieberman visited Malta for a bilateral meeting with the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. During his visit, the Israeli Minister met with the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, at Auberge de Castille and also made a courtesy call on H.E. the President, Dr George Abela at the Palace, Valletta.
- **27 June 2010** The shortfall between the government's recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first five months this year improved by €6.2 million to €288.2 million when compared to the corresponding period last year, the National Statistics Office said. The National Statistics Office said the 2.1 per cent decline in the government deficit was the result of a rise in recurrent revenue by €37.9 million, which was partly offset by additional expenditure of €31.7 million.
- **29 June 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, and the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, visited the STMicroelectronics plant at Hal Kirkop. They were shown a new business line investment by ST for the production of MEMS Systems (Micromechanical Systems), an innovative technology in which ST has technological leadership and which offers substantial prospects for ST's business in Malta.
- **29 June 2010** H.E. Mr Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, and Mrs Napolitano arrived in Malta on a two-day state visit. The Italian President had talks with H.E. the President, Dr George Abela, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. He visited places of interest and had a meeting with the Italian Military Mission in Malta.
- **30 June 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, and the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Senator Mr Alfredo Mantica, signed a bilateral agreement on the maintenance of stocks of crude oil and petroleum products stored in the territory of the Italian Republic and of the Republic of Malta.

JULY

- **1 July 2010** Cruise passenger arrivals in May rose by 71% from the same month last year to reach 55,068 persons, the National Statistics Office said. There were 34 cruise liner calls. Passengers from EU countries amounted to 44,150, with Germany and Italy being the leading markets. Same-day visitors from Non-EU countries stood at 10,918, of whom 5,439 (49.8%) were American.
- **1 July 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, visited Ta` Maggi SME Park in Zabbar. The €4.6 million project, a joint-venture between the government and the private sector, will create industrial space for small businesses, many of which currently work in residential areas.

- **2 July 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, visited KOLs Ltd in occasion of the International Day dedicated to Cooperatives. The company offers a laundry service to all state hospitals in Malta and Gozo, as well as to some private ones.
- **2 July 2010** With an air temperature of 22.9°C, June was slightly cooler than the climate average for the month, the Meteorological Office said. The temperature was 0.1°C less than the climate norm. The lowest minimum temperature last June was 16°C and this was recorded on June 2 and June 26.
- **2 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, launched the air ambulance service, a new investment undertaken by Medilink International, a Maltese company with Tunisian partners. The Hon Joe Cassar Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, was also present.
- **2 July 2010** Two bilateral agreements have been signed with Serbia by the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, during an official two-day visit. During his visit, Dr Borg held talks with Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic, Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic, Speaker of the National Assembly Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic, and with deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Ivica Dacic.
- **3 July 2010** Tourists arriving in Malta last May numbered 127,214, up by 17.5% when compared to the same period year, according to Tourstat data published by the National Statistics Office. The National Statistics Office said that total nights spent at Malta stood at 882,296. The majority of tourists visiting Malta were on holiday, yet business tourists registered a significant increase.
- **6 July 2010** The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, visited the Silver Spirit, a six-star cruise ship which made a call at the grand harbour. The Minister said that so far this year, Malta has attracted more cruise passengers than 2008, which was a record year. Cruise visitors this year reached 155,000 in the first five months of this year.
- **8 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, was in Rome for talks with Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi.
- **8 July 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, delivered a press conference at Manoel Island Yacht Yard on the occasion of the signing of the agreement with Manoel Island Yacht Yard consortium.
- **8 July 2010** Exports grew by €24.6 million in May compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that the visible trade gap narrowed by €16.6 million in May when compared to the same month last year and reached €82.8 million. There were increases in imports and exports of €9.8 million and €26.4 million, respectively.
- **9 July 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, presided over the Junior Achievement Young Enterprise Malta Final Presentations and Awards Ceremony.
- **10 July 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, attended for the donation of 5 automated peritoneal dialysis machines by the Life Cycle Malta.
- **12 July 2010** In the second quarter of this year, the Gozo ferries carried more passengers and cars than in the same quarter last year, but performed fewer trips.

The National Statistics Office said that passengers increased by 4.7%, totalling 1,055,740 when compared to the corresponding period in 2009. The number of vehicles carried by scheduled trips went up by 1.8%, to 279,358.

- **12 July 2010** Malta's rate in May was one of the lowest in the EU, falling sharply over the past 12 months, according to statistics issued by Eurostat. The island's positive figures contrast sharply with the rest of the EU where unemployment levels in May remained at record highs, reaching 10% in the 16-member eurozone and 9.75 on average in the EU 27.
- **13 July 2010** Malta expanded its tax treaty network in South America through an agreement with Uruguay, and strengthened double taxation avoidance network through agreement with China.
- **13 July 2010** The government's financial deficit in the first quarter of this year fell to €22.3 million from €38.2 million in the same quarter last year, official figures issued show. The National Statistics Office said that during the March quarter total revenue amounted to €577.2 million, an increase of €31.8 million compared to the corresponding quarter last year.
- **14 July 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, announced that eleven local councils have been allocated a total of €8.3million under two EU rural areas improvements programmes. He was speaking during the swearing in of the successful candidates in the elections for the appointment of committees to run hamlets in various localities in Malta and Gozo.
- **16 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime minister, inaugurated a Research Simulator, a new investment undertaken by Malta Maritime Pilots.
- **16 July 2010** Malta registered the biggest increase in exports among the 27 EU member states in the first four months of the year, according to new statistics issued by Eurostat. According to the EU trade figures covering January to April, Malta managed to increase its exports by 40% over the same period of 2009, with the value of Maltese products shipped abroad this year reaching the €600 million mark.
- **16 July 2010** Trips originating from Malta last May were estimated at 18,719, up by 11.7% when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that outbound trips to EU destinations stood at 16,061, while non-EU trips were estimated at 2,658. Overall increases were recorded towards all destinations, with the UK and Italy remaining the most popular.
- **19 July 2010** A total of 4,159 new vehicle licences were issued in the second quarter of this year, of which only 36.5% were for new vehicles, figures issued by the National Statistics Office show. The rest were newly-licensed second-hand vehicles.
- **20 July 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela left Malta on a State Visit to the State of Montenegro for talks with the President of the State of Montenegro, H.E. Dr Filip Vujanovic and The Prime Minister of the State of Montenegro, H.E. Mr Milo Dukanovic.
- **20 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister toured the new equipment being installed in science and design & technology laboratories in State secondary schools. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister for Education, Employment and the Family and by the Hon Franco Debono, Parliamentary Assistant in the Office of the Prime Minister.

- **20 July 2010** The Hon Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care, inaugurated two apartments, a rehabilitation project in which a group of persons who experienced mental health problems, and are currently staying at Mount Carmel Hospital, start a new life within the community.
 - **21 July 2010** A seasonal drop in the price of garments has led to a marginal drop in the Retail Price Index in June to 101.21 from 101.61 in May. The National Statistics Office said that the drop primarily reflected a decrease of 2.66% in the clothing and footwear index.
 - **22 July 2010** Total cruise passenger traffic last month stood at 46,574, up by 38.55 over the corresponding month last year. There were 25 cruise liner calls with an average 1,863 passengers per vessel. The National Statistics Office said the number of passengers in transit amounted to 43,862 and those who embarked from Malta stood at 1,851. Passengers from EU countries amounted to 39,539, Italy being the predominant market. Same-day visitors from non-EU countries stood at 7,035, a decrease of 16.7% when compared to 2009.
 - **22 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, accompanied by the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, joined primary school children who were taken on a harbour tour aimed at helping them appreciate the bastions.
- 24 July 2010** A photography exhibition by Maltese group 'Flickristi' was held at the French town of Lavandou to inaugurate the opening of the yacht race "Sur la Route de Malte". The exhibition, organised by the Embassy of Malta in France and the Malta Tourism Office in France, is based around a book entitled "Malta Seascapes", containing a selection of photographs taken by members of the group illustrating the beauty of the Maltese shorelines.
- **26 July 2010** The highest number of traffic accidents occur on Fridays, but the highest casualty rate is on Sundays, giving Sundays the highest casualty-to-accident ratio, according to figures issued by the National Statistics Office. The office said the number of reported traffic accidents grew by 144 in the second quarter of this year compared to the same period of last year, and reached 3,838. Increases were recorded in all districts except Gozo.
 - **27 July 2010** Valletta Road in Zurrieq has been re-opened after a reconstruction project. The project cost €4.4million, including implementing services, rebuilding weak foundations, and increasing resistance. While addressing the media, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, said that the government had invested about €40 million in reconstructing arterial and distributary roads ever since Malta joined the EU in 2004, which did not include roads that were entrenched in towns and cities, or patching work.
 - **28 July 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, and the Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, visited Valletta Waterfront.
 - **29 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, toured GO's TV operations facilities at Maghtab, where he was given an explanation of the new high tech equipment at the upgraded sports payout facilities, as well as the renovation works carried out over the past months.

- **30 July 2010** Unemployment in Malta has continued to decrease in June declining to 6.5%, the lowest in the past 12 months. According to new EU statistics issued Brussels, Malta has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU and is only outdone by Austria (3.9%), the Netherlands (4.4%) and Luxembourg (5.3%) among the 27 member states. Eurostat said that in June Malta managed to further lower its unemployment rate by 0.2% from 6.75 in May and 7.2% in June 2009.
- **30 July 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, accompanied by Mrs Gonzi and the Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, visited Tarxien Temples.
- **30 July 2010** Malta needed 150 new beds each year for elderly care in homes to cover the needs of the aging population, the Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy, said while speaking during a press breakfast on elderly people and domestic violence held to mark the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion. Mr Galea said that there were, at this point, close to 4,000 beds for the elderly in the 37 homes run by the government, the church and the private sector.
- **31 July 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, visited volunteers of the Civil Protection Department's S.P.I.D.E.R. team who were engaged in a three-day exercise in urban search and rescue.

August

- **2 August 2010** July was slightly warmer than the norm, but the average wind speed was less than expected during a typical July. The MIA said that last month's mean air temperature was 26.7 °C which exceeded the climate norm by 0.8 °C. The highest air temperature last month peaked to 38.3°C on July 24th. This was, however, 4.4 °C less than the highest temperature of 42.7 °C recorded in July 1988.
- **2 August 2010** Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 6.3% during the first half of this year, driven mainly by outlays on retirement pensions, contributory bonus, social assistance and widows' pensions, the National Statistics Office said. Total expenditure on social security benefits amounted to €376.7 million during the first six months of 2010, up by €22.4 million over the corresponding period last year. This reflected mainly higher expenditure on contributory benefits amounting to €19.1 million.
- **3 August 2010** Passenger movements at the airport reached a July high record of 401,952, Malta International Airport reported. With 54,729 additional movements, the increase was of 15.8% over last year.
- **5 August 2010** The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, launched a public consultation on "A proposal for a Water Policy for the Maltese Islands".
- **6 August 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited Skola Sajf and accompanied the students to Auberge de Castille for a tour.
- **6 August 2010** The visible trade gap in June narrowed by €22.4 million when compared to the corresponding month last year, according to preliminary figures published by the National Statistics Office. The National Statistics Office said that the visible trade gap in June stood at €70.6 million, down by €22.4 million when

compared to the corresponding month in 2009. There were increases in imports and exports of €26.7 million and €49.1 million respectively.

- **8 August 2010** H.E. the President, Dr George Abela, and Mrs Abela hosted the August Moon Ball, in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund, at the Verdala Palace.
- **9 August 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, together with the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister for Education, Employment and the Family, presided over the Arts Scholarships award-giving ceremony.
- **10 August 2010** The Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister, visited Allied Newspapers, publishers of The Times, The Sunday Times and timesofmalta.com, to mark the 75th anniversary of the first issue of The Times. He was greeted by Vincent Buhagiar, managing director and directors Adrian Hillman and Austin Bencini and met the staff in the various departments of the company.
- **10 August 2010** The volume and wholesale value of fresh fruit and vegetables decreased by 2.4% and 13.2% respectively in the second quarter of this year, when compared to the corresponding period in 2009. The National Statistics Office said that fresh fruit and vegetable supplies for the second quarter of 2010 stood at 11.9 million kilogrammes, a drop of 2.4% over the comparative period in 2009. Concurrently, the wholesale value decreased by 13.2%, to €5.6 million. The supply of fresh vegetables went down by 2.9% to 11.1 million kilogrammes.
- **11 August 2010** Cruise passenger visitors dropped by 7.6% in July. It said that 24 cruise ships called in Grand Harbour last month. They carried 48,731 passengers, 7.6% less than the total for July 2009 which was 52,739.
- **11 August 2010** The wholesale value of fresh fruit and vegetables in the second quarter of this year dropped by 13.2% compared to the same period last year, due to an increase in supply of potatoes, tomatoes and watermelons, among others. However, the National Statistics Office said the overall supply went down to 11.9 million kilograms, a reduction of 2.4%. The wholesale value stood at €5.6 million.
- **12 August 2010** President Emeritus, Prof. Guido de Marco, aged 79, passed peacefully away at Mater Dei Hospital, at 4.18 p.m.
- **12 August 2010** Maltese travellers spend an average of €125 per night while abroad, the National Statistics Office said today. It said that in the first six months of the year the total budgeted expenditure by outbound tourists stood at €105.5 million. The National Statistics Office said that the number of Maltese going abroad in June increased by 23.5% over the same month last year to reach 24,300. 20,762 of those trips were to EU destinations.
- **15 August 2010** Hundreds of people filed past the body of Guido de Marco in silent tribute to the former President and long-serving politician. The flow of people at the Palace in Valletta was constant, with some mourners pausing briefly to say a prayer and recall their memories of one of Malta's best known politicians.
- **15 August 2010** The Prime Minister of Kuwait, Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, arrived in Malta to represent the Emir for the state funeral of President Emeritus Guido de Marco. Prof De Marco had enjoyed respect in Kuwait following his support for the country when it was invaded by Iraq in 1990. Prof de Marco was President of the United Nations General Assembly at the time and had broken with protocol when he came down from his chair to personally greet the Emir when he addressed the Assembly. Later, Prof De Marco had also visited the newly-liberated country.

- **16 August 2010** The nation bid its final farewell to President Emeritus, Prof. Guido de Marco with a state funeral that drew hundreds of people to Valletta. Archbishop Paul Cremona led the funeral mass at St. John's Co-Cathedral. The congregation was headed by President George Abela as well as Chief Justice Vincent DeGaetano, Speaker of the House, Michael Frendo, and Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi.
- **17 August 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, inaugurated a photo-voltaic system installed by the Local Council and the newly-refurbished Misrah San Guzepp at Hal Safi.
- **18 August 2010** The Malta Government Scholarship Scheme has been launched for undergraduates wishing to read for degrees not offered at the University or Mcast. The Education Ministry said the scheme was aimed at getting more students into higher education both locally and abroad, to encourage excellent private sector academic studies and to give Maltese and Gozitan students a wider choice. Some 307 students have benefitted from such schemes since 2007.
- **18 August 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, launched the Fish hawkers' Guide drawn up by the Malta Standards Authority. The guidelines specify hygiene requirements, the type of ice needed to keep fish fresh, packaging, processing and transportation methods as well as the keeping of correct documentation.
- **19 August 2010** The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo visited ongoing works at the Żejta Valley in Victoria. Some 18,000 tons of waste and silt have been collected during dredging and a clean-up along the valley, the Gozo Ministry said.
- **20 August 2010** The National Statistics Office said that no fatal accidents at work were reported in the second quarter of this year and claims in respect of non-fatal ones decreased by 2.6% when compared to the corresponding period last year. The National Statistics Office said that according to administrative records 848 workers had an occupational accident in the period under review, a decrease of 23 accidents over the same period in 2009.
- **21 August 2010** A total of 250 cats and dogs have been adopted since the beginning of the year after these were saved by the Animal Welfare Department, the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister Resources and Rural Affairs said while speaking during a meeting with the families who adopted the animals in the past months on the occasion of the World Day for Abandoned Animals. He said that the department received around 200 telephone calls a month, an average of seven a day.
- **23 August 2010** The Retail Price Index went down by 0.14% last month, primarily reflecting a decrease of 9.57% in the clothing and footwear index, mainly due to a seasonal drop in the price of garments.
- **23 August 2010** The Malta Union of Teachers and the government signed a new collective agreement for state school teachers and educators. The agreement builds on that of July 2007 and includes an increase in allowances over the next two years. MUT President John Bencini and the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, agreed that the new collective agreement was not about the allowances but focused on improving the education system.
- **24 August 2010** The total arrivals in collective accommodation last June stood at 128,090, an increase of 17.7% over the same month last year, the National Statistics

Office said. Total guest nights increased by 15.9%, with an average length of stay of six nights.

- **25 August 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs said that the tomato growing season this year was a successful one with only 1 to 2% of the crop having to be destroyed because of the pest *tuta absoluta*. He said that 20% of last year's production had to be destroyed because of this pest, intercepted for the first time in the Maltese islands in April last year. To help producers, the government had drawn up a plan following consultation with the organisations representing growers, strengthened the legislative sectors and issues measures of controls, guidelines and instructions.
- **26 August 2010** The registered unemployed in July decreased by 693 to 6,828 compared to the same month last year but increased by nearly 1% over the previous month, the National Statistics Office said. The number of registered unemployed totalled 6,140 in Malta and 688 in Gozo. Over the one-year period to July, unemployment decreased by 620 and 73 in Malta and Gozo, respectively. There was a significant reduction in the number of registered unemployed across all age groups.
- **27 August 2010** The government's shortfall between recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first seven months this year was recorded at €322.1 million, a decline of 12.6% from €368.6 million last year. The National Statistics Office said total expenditure went up by €59.3 million and was more than offset by an increase in recurrent revenue of €105.8 million, improving the government deficit by €46.5 million.
- **27 August 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, launched a draft standard on 'Public Playgrounds – Requirements for Public Playground Safety and their Management.'
- **29 August 2010** In the first 7 months of this year, 28 foreign politicians and dignitaries visited Malta, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. In the same period, the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, paid 18 official visits to a number of countries in Europe and further afield. During some of these visits, bilateral agreements strengthening Malta's foreign policy were signed, including with Italy, Montenegro, Croatia, France, Serbia, Poland, India, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, China and Tunisia. Dr Borg also took part in the General Affairs and Foreign Affairs councils meetings. The ministry also assisted in the signing or implementation of 35 bilateral agreements with several countries. 99 agreements have been signed since March 2008. Such agreements include those on double taxation, visa removal, cooperation in health, culture, education, science, and the fight against drugs and organised criminality, investment promotion and protection, air services and tourism.
- **31 August 2010** An environmental monitoring station has been installed at the Ġgantija Temples in Xagħra, Gozo. The station will enable specialists to monitor the temples' exposure to the environmental elements, and gauge the toll that climate takes on the open-air sites such as erosion levels affecting the prehistoric structure.
- **31 August 2010** There was an increase of 17.5% in the number of tourists visiting Malta in July when compared to the corresponding month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that according to Tourstat statistics, the total nights spent in Malta also increased by 17%.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 September 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care and the Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue officially opened the new Birgu Health Clinic. The clinic was transferred from St John Tower Street. It offers the locality basic health services and, although it operates on an appointment basis, walk-ins are also treated.
- 1 September 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi was in Libya for the 41st anniversary celebration of the Great Al Fateh Revolution. He was attending the celebrations on the invitation of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.
- 1 September 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, announced works on more residential roads under the Public-Private Partnership Scheme.
- 1 September 2010** The highest temperature recorded at Luqa Airport last month was 36°C on the 21st August, the Meteorological Office said. This was lower than the record high of 43.8°C registered on August 9, 1999. But the mean maximum temperature last month was above the climate norm by almost a degree, making it a warmer month.
- 2 September 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela, paid an official visit to STMicroelectronics. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, was also in attendance. The President was thanked personally by Alain Dutheil, the chief operations officer of ST worldwide, for his recent involvement in key discussions between the management and the government, as well as in the delicate discussions with the employees' representatives and the union.
- 2 September 2010** Subscriptions to all forms of communication technology increased in this year's second quarter when compared to the corresponding period in 2009. The National Statistics Office said that the internet subscription index rose by 9% when compared to the corresponding quarter last year. There was a shift in internet subscriptions from active narrowband (dial-up) to broadband. Year-on-year the number of broadband users increased by 10.2% while the number of dial-up users dropped by 86.6%.
- 3 September 2010** H.E. Dr Guido Westerwalle, Vice Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany visited Malta for talks with the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also paid courtesy calls on H.E. the President, George Abela and the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi.
- 3 September 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, inaugurated a new playing-field in Munxar. The playground is the first one that conforms to standards established by the Malta Standards Authority. The Munxar Local Council has benefitted from several schemes offered by the Government to implement the Ġuże' Aquilina Garden project, in which €219,000 have been invested.
- 3 September 2010** The Employment and Training Corporation received a total of 4,498 vacancies in the first six months of this year, an increase of 843 vacancies (23%) over the same period last year. A total of 1,874 were placed in employment during the first half of this year, an increase of 300 people (19%) over the same period last year. During the same period, there were 1,004 redundancies, which signified a drop of 397 (28%) from the same period last year.

- **3 September 2010** The number of people employed on a full-time basis dropped by 1,109 between February and March when compared to the same period last year but an increase of 279 part-timers was reported, the National Statistics Office said. It said that in March, the full-time gainfully-occupied population amounted to 144,047, while the registered unemployed amounted to 7,556. Accordingly, the labour supply stood at 151,603.
- **3 September 2010** Passenger movements at Malta International Airport in August reached an all-time record of 427,924, a 13.4% increase on the same month last year. Seat capacity has also hit an all-time record with 536,495 seats, an increase of 10.1%.
- **4 September 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela, inaugurated the "Honours List Collective Exhibition" in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund with the collaboration of the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce at the San Anton Palace.
- **4 September 2010** The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, visited the Scouts Group, Ghajn Tuffieha camp site. During his visit, he officially opened the new high ropes project which was partly financed by the Government.
- **5 September 2010** A Maltese medical team led by emergency physician Jonathan Joslin has won the best foreign team and placed fourth overall in the European Emergency Medicine Championship held in Poland. The team, which also included emergency physician Michael Spiteri and emergency nurse Victoria Rausi, competed with 40 European teams and a New York guest team in a competition based on scenarios a medical team could face when they called an ambulance in various cases of emergency. The Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, congratulated the team which, he said, showed that the Maltese had great ability to face challenges on an international level.
- **6 September 2010** The trade gap widened by €27.8 million in July as the growth in imports galloped ahead of growth in exports, figures issued by the National Statistics show. It said that the trade gap in July stood at €182.5 million. There were increases in imports and exports of €36.6 million and €8.8 million respectively. The increase in imports was mainly due to industrial supplies and capital goods, while a decrease was registered in fuels and lubricants, and consumer goods.**7 September 2010** The Gross Domestic Product for the second quarter of this year amounted to €1,513.4 million, an increase of 6.8% over the corresponding period last year, according to provisional estimates published by the National Statistics Office. The National Statistics Office said that in real terms, the GDP went up by 3.9%
- **7 September 2010** The value of exports rose by €306.5 million in the first seven months of this year when compared with the same period in 2009, causing the country's visible trade gap to narrow by almost a quarter. The National Statistics Office said the increase followed an improvement in the export of machinery and transport equipment. Increases were also registered for mineral fuels, lubricants, food, chemicals, semi-manufactured goods, beverages and tobacco and crude materials, among others.
- **7 September 2010** Official celebrations to mark Victory Day started with the laying of wreaths by the Chairman and the Secretary of the National Festivities Committee at Santa Maria Addolorata Cemetery and the Victory Monument in Senglea, followed by a commemorative musico-literary evening in Valletta's Great Siege Square in Republic Street.

- **8 September 2009** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, laid a wreath at 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 for the 21st time. Cospicua placed second and Marsa third. The centuries-old event attracted strong interest, particularly in the dockyard towns, with many people lining the bastions to cheer the rowers.
- **9 September 2010** H.E. The President, George Abela, presided over the swearing-in ceremony of Dr Silvio Camilleri, as the newly appointed Chief Justice.
- **9 September 2010** 82% of Maltese households have a high speed internet connection, beating Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. Malta ranks third, behind Iceland, at 86.7%, and Korea, at 95.9%, in a survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications welcomed the figures, saying the increase in the take-up of broadband was the most significant product of the Government's initiatives to narrow the digital divide. It said that between June 2009 and June 2010, broadband subscriptions in Malta surged by an unprecedented 10.2%, the largest jump recorded over the years, according to figures compiled by the National Statistics Office.
- **10 September 2010** A total of 22 cruise ships called at Grand Harbour last month, bringing 51,526 passengers, a drop of 7.3% from August last year. Viset, the cruise terminal operator, said the drop was attributed to the decision by one of the cruise lines to follow a different Mediterranean itinerary to that of last year. The number of passengers who arrived in Grand Harbour since the beginning of the year stands at 298,409 compared to 240,822 registered during the first eight months of 2009, an increase of 24% on last year.
- **10 September 2010** The Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs referred to calls by Brussels for groundwater extraction to be billed and said that the Government intended to safeguard the legitimate use of groundwater for agricultural purposes. The Ministry said that this will be done through the allocation of quotas to individual farmers which will ensure that agricultural land has the sufficient allocation of water to remain sustainable. Such measures are allowed in terms of the Water Framework Directive. The Ministry has submitted a draft Water Catchment Management Plan to the European Commission.
- **10 September 2010** The Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said that the amount of work carried out by the hospital's emergency department staff illustrated the high standards of care offered. He was speaking at a meeting to congratulate three members of staff for their success in Poland, where they won best foreign team and fourth overall prize in the First European Emergency Medicine Championship.
- **10 September 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, toured the 64th edition of France's second-largest agricultural fair, the Foire de Chalons, held annually in the Champagne-Ardenne region of France. The fair attracts over 200,000 visitors each year. Malta has been invited as guest of honour. The Minister met with his French counterpart, Bruno Lemaire and also a number of important figures in the agro-alimentary industry to discuss ways of improving existing cooperation between the two countries.

- **11 September 2010** The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, received the Special Olympics athletes before they departed for Poland for the European Championships.
- **13 September 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, visited factory expansion by Actavis Ltd. Actavis is investing €12million on a new warehouse and research facility adjacent to its factory. The warehouse will enable the pharmaceutical company to improve its operational capabilities following its recent expansions, the minister said. The company has invested more than €50 million since it started its Malta operation.
- **15 September 2010** 4.4% of Malta's population in 2009 consisted of foreigners according to the latest statistics issued in Brussels by Eurostat, an increase of 3,100 over 2008. The increase resulted mostly from citizens of non-EU member states particularly from sub-Saharan Africans which were granted international protection. According to the new figures, in 2009 there were 18,100 foreign residents in Malta, 8,200 coming from other EU member states and 9,900 from non-EU member states. In 2008, the number of foreign residents in Malta stood at 15,000. In 2009 the number of EU citizens residing in the island increased by just 200 when compared to 2008, while the population in Malta from non-EU citizens grew by 2,900.
- **15 September 2010** The retail price index rose by 1% in August compared to the previous month, the National Statistics Office said. It said the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went up to 115.41 from 114.29 in July.
- **15 September 2010** The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport,, said that some 1,200 people were given subsidies this year on the purchase of bicycles, as part of a scheme which was announced in the Budget speech and provided for refunds of 15.2% of the purchase price. This was a way to encourage more people to use bicycles. He said this while speaking at a press conference during which Inspire, the foundation which runs services for people with disabilities, announced cycling events to coincide with International Car Free Day on September 22.
- **15 September 2010** H.G. Archbishop Paul Cremona visited the United Kingdom, where he called on Maltese patients receiving medical treatment in London and Surrey. He also met Maltese members of the clergy in London and attended Malta Day celebrations. He was accompanied by the Maltese High Commissioner Joseph Zammit Tabona, and Hanan El Khatib, First Secretary and Consul at the Malta High Commission. The Archbishop met the Maltese patients at the Royal Marsden Hospital and at the Puttinu Cares apartments in Sutton. He also visited the Franciscan Fathers, the Ursuline Sisters in North London and the Franciscan Sisters in Victoria.
- **15 September 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, inaugurated 'Il-Bejta' Childcare and Family Support Centre at Bormla Primary School.
- **16 September 2010** The number of Maltese going to the UK decreased slightly in July although all other popular EU destinations for Maltese holidaymakers saw increases. The National Statistics Office said that 32,176 Maltese went abroad in July, up by 1.8% over the corresponding month of 2009. A total of 7,392 Maltese went to the UK in July this year, compared to 7,392 in July last year and 5,709 in July 2008. Tourism to the UK had increased because of the favourable exchange rate. Trips to non-EU destinations, standing at 3,668, continued their downward trend.
- **16 September 2010** The EU allocated €21,000 to be used exclusively in projects aimed at enhancing the Maltese bee population, which will also be 50% funded from the

national coffers. According to the European Commission, Malta has 2,722 bee hives. This support will be used to enhance the island's bee population by re-stocking hives and introducing programmes against illnesses, which have contributed substantially to the decline of the insect's population across the EU in recent years.

- **16 September 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, accompanied by the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Minister, participated in a one-day summit meeting in Brussels focusing on the EU's relations with its international partners.
- **17 September 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, presided over the 2010 European Carpisa Best Retail Outlet Award, won by Carpisa Malta.
- **17 September 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, and the committee set up by the Government to draw up a strategy for the introduction of more electric cars in Malta, had a meeting with experts from Portugal. Portugal is recognised as being the most advanced country in this sector. The aim of the meeting was to hear their experiences on the setting up of a network to facilitate the use of electric cars.
- **17 September 2010** Industrial turnover and manufacturing new orders rose by 25.9% and 32.8% respectively in the second quarter of this year over the corresponding quarter of 2009. The National Statistics Office said that turnover for energy and capital goods increased by 45.3% and 27.85 respectively; while consumer goods rose by 2.6%, on account of a rise of 3.1% in non-durable consumer goods, whereas durable consumer goods fell by 6.7%. Domestic industrial turnover increased by 21.6% on account of a 45.3% rise in energy. Non-domestic industrial turnover rose by 30.5% mainly on account of 39.5% and 14.6% increases in turnover for intermediate and consumer goods respectively.
- **18 September 2010** Malta's exports data showed that Malta registered the biggest growth within the EU in the first seven months of the year. Eurostat said Malta exported €900 million worth of products between January and July, an increase of €200 million, or 31%, over the same period in 2009.
- **18 September 2010** The consumer price index rose by 0.1% last month over the previous August, with substantially more expensive accommodation being offset by a sharp decline in the cost of clothing and footwear. The 12-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 1% and the annual rate 3%.
- **20 September 2010** The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, addressed a press conference to introduce the Changing of the Palace Guards. Brigadier Martin Xuereb, Commander of the Armed Forces of Malta, was in attendance. H.E. the President, George Abela was also present for the ceremony. The Parliamentary Secretary said the ceremony dates back to the time of the knights, when the Palace Square was actually known as Piazza della Guardia and the grandmaster's personal guard lived in the buildings around the square.
- **20 September 2010** Former Chief Justice Vincent Degaetano was sworn in as a judge at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The ceremony was held in the Grand Chamber of the Court in the Palace of Human Rights of the Council of Europe. Court President Jean-Paul Costa welcomed Judge Degaetano and said he had a complete preparation to exercise his new responsibilities in Strasbourg, having held the most senior position in the Maltese judiciary.

- **21 September 2010** 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 H.E. the President, George Abela and the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi. The ceremony included a parade by the Armed Forces of Malta and the firing of a salute.
- **22 September 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, discussed procedures for the repatriation of migrants to Ghana and Nigeria when he met delegations from the two countries. The delegations were in Malta to take part in a conference on illegal immigration. The Ghanaian delegation was led by Quasi Apea-Kubi, Deputy Minister for the Interior and the Nigerian delegation was led by the Head of Immigration Muhammad Babandede.
- **22 September 2010** Cruise passenger arrivals last month slipped 9.2% to reach 52,816 when compared to August 2009, the National Statistics Office said. Passengers in transit numbered 50,203, while those embarking from Malta stood at 1,290.
- **22 September 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, New York. The Minister said he was confident Malta will be able to land significant posts within the new EU diplomatic service.
- **22 September 2010** A total of 32,176 people went abroad last July, an increase of 1.8% over the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. 28,508, flew to destinations within the EU, with all destinations registering increases. 3,668 flew to non-EU destinations, which represented a decline over last year.
- **23 September 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi inaugurated the protective structures and a visitors' centre, formally concluding a €4.7 million project partly funded by the EU. The Prime Minister said that the project was aimed at giving a future to Malta's past. The chairman of Heritage Malta, Joseph Said, announced that experts have already started seeing the first signs that the protective tents erected over Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Temples are slowing down the weathering of that ancient stonework.
- **23 September 2010** The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) has entered into a three-year agreement with Vodafone Malta Ltd for the provision of internet bandwidth and routing services to meet the growing demand within government departments and state schools. Apart from enhancing the quality of its bandwidth, through this agreement, MITA will be doubling the internet bandwidth currently provided to departments and schools. MITA offers internet services to approximately 16,500 public service users and more than 30,000 students across all state schools. This agreement will also increase local internet bandwidth and enable faster access to government's portals and all the eGovernment services hosted by MITA.
- **23 September 2010** Malta has over the past two and a half years reduced the number of pending infringement cases against it by half, an EU report shows. According to the report, between November 2007 and May 2010, Malta resolved 47% of its alleged infringements, cutting down the number of legal challenges started by the EU to just 23.
- **23 September 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, resigned from his duties as Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister.

- **23 September 2010** Total arrivals in hotels, guesthouses, aparthotels and hostels in July reached 144,878, an increase of 15% when compared to last year's levels, the National Statistics Office said. It said that the average length of stay during the month stood at 6.9 nights. Non-resident arrivals and nights both registered increases over 2009 and stood at 132,972 and 977,390 respectively.
- **24 September 2010** A €26 million investment from European funds for agro-tourism, conservation and rural heritage improvement projects was announced by the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs. The funds form part of the €100 million dedicated for the country's rural development programme between 2007 and 2013.
- **24 September 2010** A new cheese factory belonging to Magro Brothers was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, at Xewkija, Gozo. The Prime Minister described the ceremony as a celebration of Magro Brothers' successes in the 94 years of their existence, during which they managed to turn challenges into opportunities.
- **25 September 2010** The 5th edition of Notte Bianca took place in Valletta. A total 83 spots all over Valletta were highlighted. Activities included music, dance, art and drama in all the main squares. Museums stayed open late into the night and entrance was free. The Castille Vaults opened its doors for the first time. A documentary 'Il-Vapur ta' l-Art', compiled by the Department of Information, was screened at the Aula Magna of the Old University Building in St Paul Street.
- **26 September 2010** MEP David Casa has been elected vice-president of the European People's Party Workers' Group. The group forms part of the EPP Employment and Social Affairs Committee and is composed of over 40 MEPs. The group is responsible for addressing issues that are of interest to European workers.
- **27 September 2010** Early figures on the international economic and financial transactions of Malta during the second quarter portray deterioration in the current account balance of €32.9 million, the National Statistics Office said. It said that the net surplus of €136.1 million in the June quarter last year dropped to €103.3 million this June quarter. The National Statistics Office said this was essentially due to an adverse shift in the net balances of the current transfers account and the income account of the statement.
- **28 September 2010** Donations to events organised by the Malta Community Chest Fund increased by €1.85 million last year from the previous year, according to a report issued by the Malta Community Chest Fund. The fund also reported a surplus of €879,571 compared to a deficit of €482,431 in the previous year. Most of the growth in donations was made during I-Istrina, where a record collection of €2.2 million was made. The total amount of contributions to the Malta Community Chest Fund was €2.5 million. H.E. the President, George Abela, chairman of the fund, said the list of beneficiaries from the money raised during I-Istrina was increased by 10 following the success of the campaign. He was speaking before the handing out of cheques to 28 NGOs, which shared just over €1 million from the campaign. The rest of the funds are to be used by the Community Chest Fund, which organised I-Istrina.
- **28 September 2010** Tourist arrivals in August increased by 12% over the same month last year, as the tourist industry maintained the double digit growth it has been enjoying this year. The National Statistics Office said that arrivals in August reached 193,115, the majority of whom were holiday makers. As in previous months, most inbound tourists came from EU Member States, the main markets being the UK and Italy. Tourists coming from countries outside the EU increased by 22%.

- **29 September 2010** A section of the façade of the President's Palace in Valletta at the corner of Archbishop Street overlooking St George's Square, has been uncovered after months of restoration work. The work was carried out by the Restoration Unit of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs as part of a project which started in 2009 and will take four years to complete.
- **29 September 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, ratified the optional protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The event took place in New York during the United Nations General Assembly.
- **29 September 2010** The Hon. Michael Frendo, Speaker of the House of Representatives addressed the inaugural session of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training. The meeting is an annual gathering of deans and directors of institutions at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. About 75 diplomats gathered in Parliament to discuss the way forward in diplomatic training. William Shija, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, acknowledged Malta's contribution to the Commonwealth, saying the country had hosted several workshops on small state issues and democracy.
- **30 September 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, said that between August 2005 and the end of June 2010 there was a total of 6,127 vehicles which were tested under the Emissions Alert Scheme. 44 of them belonged to government departments, but did not include vehicles rented by the government. He said that during the same period there had been 6,741 vehicles summoned for testing but not presented. Each of them had had its road licence reissue restricted until it was tested and passed the test. The Minister added also that between 2005 and June 2010, 12,060 vehicles had been tested for emissions in roadside checks, with 6,479 failing the test.
- **30 September 2010** The Labour Force Survey estimates indicated an increase in employment in the second quarter this year, when compared to the corresponding quarter of 2009. The National Statistics Office said that in the second quarter this year, the number of employed persons was estimated at 165,443 while the number of unemployed stood at 12,089, amounting to 47% and 3% of the total population aged 15 and over, respectively. Nearly half of those within this age group were inactive, and stood at 174,474.
- **30 September 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela, left Malta on an official visit to Cyprus. The President is visiting Cyprus for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus.

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- **1 October 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela made an official visit to Cyprus on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Establishment of the Republic of Cyprus.
- **1 October 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land visited Smoochie Ltd, an SME producer of fruit smoothies. The two-and-a-half year old SME shall be increasing its workforce to four following a capital investment of around €300,000.

- **1 October 2010** A total 75.2mm of rain fell at Luqa Airport last month, well over the September norm of 40.4mm. The wettest day was September 24 with 34.6mm of rain. The wettest September on record was in 1997 when 266.9mm fell and the driest one was that of 1943 when there had been no rain at all.
- **1 October 2010** The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy, delivered food to an elderly person as part of the Meals on Wheels service to mark the International Day for the Elderly. The Parliamentary Secretary said that a total 76,607 meals were distributed to the elderly as part of the Meals on Wheels service last year. He said that 55,297 meals had already been distributed this year, 7,664 more than in the same period last year. The elderly using the service were also given a small hamper on the occasion of the International Day of the Elderly.
- **1 October 2010** In August, Malta registered the largest annual drop in the number of unemployed from among the 27 member states, according to new figures issued by Eurostat. It said that over a period of 12 months, Malta last August managed to lower its unemployment rate by 1%, the best overall performance in the EU. In August, Malta's unemployment rate stood at 6.2%, down from 7.2% in August last year. Overall, Malta had the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the EU. Eurostat said that the sharpest unemployment fall in Malta was registered among those aged under 25. In August the unemployment rate in this category stood at 11.2%, down from 14.8% a year earlier.
- **1 October 2010** Senior personnel from the Armed Forces of Malta led by Brig. Martin Xuereb, attended thanksgiving mass at St. John's Co-Cathedral as part of the army's 40th anniversary celebration. The concelebration was led by Gozo bishop Mario Grech and included the participation of AFM chaplain Joseph Meli, past chaplains, as well as the chaplains of the Corradino Correctional Facilities and the police force. The congregation was led by acting President Anton Tabone and the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister. Mass was preceded by a guard of honour.
- **1 October 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela attended celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. Dr Abela, was in Cyprus as guest of President Demetris Christofias.
- **2 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited the Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Temples Open Day. Information on the temples, their interpretation and design, the tents project, the conservation of stone and other objects, the natural surrounding environment and past scientific projects were provided. Visitors could also look at the clay works and obtain information on the finds during excavations.
- **2 October 2010** The Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta berthed its flagship, the Diciotti-class P-61, at Mgarr Harbour, for its first ever open day in Gozo. The day was organised as part of the army's 40th anniversary celebrations. The acting President, Anton Tabone and the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo visited the open day.
- **2 October 2010** French ship CMA CGM launched its largest Malta-registered containership, an investment worth €107 million. The ship was launched in a grand ceremony that saw the CMA CGM Pegasus being christened by the Prime Minister's wife, Kate Gonzi. The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, praised the company, which has operated the Freeport since 2004, and invested €120 million in the terminals over and above plans to invest another €95 million in other projects.

- 2 October 2010** Over 30,000 Skolasajf students took part in the EU anti-smoking campaign, Help, for a life without tobacco this summer. The campaign, held in all EU member states, was geared at tobacco prevention and awareness about the dangers of passive smoking as tobacco-related deaths were the single largest cause of death in Europe. The 32,000 pupils enrolled in Skolasajf were given an information pack about the negative effects of smoking and attended interactive fun sessions about health issues. The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, attended a picture presentation of the best drawings by pupils as part of the campaign, which was held at the Education Division.
- 3 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi and the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, inaugurated the "Centru San Frangisk" Animal Welfare After-Care Centre. The €300,000 centre, set up by the Rural Affairs Ministry close to the vegetable market at Ta' Qali, features facilities for the care of strays picked up by the Animal Welfare Department and rehabilitation services for pets that would have been operated privately but need post-operative care. Operations will also be held at the centre, which is geared to offer care for a range of animals, including horses.
- 4 October 2010** Malta International Airport said that it handled 373,610 passengers in September, a record for the month. The increase in passenger movements, when compared to the same month last year, reached 15.4%. Seat capacity in the same month was 498,243, an increase of 11.5% over September 2009. In September, aircraft movements grew by 11.7% over the corresponding period last year, whilst the average seat load factor also increased by 2.5 percentage points to reach 75.0%, up from the 72.5% registered in September 2009.
- 4 October 2010** Unemployment in August was down by 854 over August 2009 and 239 when compared to the preceding month, the National Statistics Office said. It said that 6,589 were registered as unemployed in August. In the 12-month period to August 2010, the number of registered unemployed decreased by 11.5% and reached 6,589. On the other hand, the registered unemployed decreased by 3.5% between July and August 2010.
- 4 October 2010** Malta has been awarded 'Best International Destination' at the Group Leisure Awards held earlier this week. The Malta Tourism Authority said that the annual Group Leisure Awards were presented in Birmingham in front of 350 members of the UK and international travel trade. The Best International Destination category was sponsored by Poppy Travel, official travel arm of The Royal British Legion. The Group Leisure Awards are voted for by readers of Group Leisure, the UK's number one monthly magazine for group travel organizers.
- 5 October 2010** Retail sales across the 16-nation eurozone fell by 0.4% in August following a modest 0.1% rise in July, European Union figures showed. In the wider, 27-nation EU, which includes non-euro members Britain and Poland, retail sales fell by 0.3% in August following a 0.1% rise in July, the Eurostat data agency said. Romania posted the biggest rise at 5.2%, followed by increases of 1.3% in Lithuania and 1.1% in Spain. The countries with the biggest falls were Austria, with a drop of 3.6%, Slovenia, 2.6%, and Malta, 2.1%. Sales in food, drinks and tobacco fell by 0.7% across the eurozone while non-food products excluding fuel grew by 0.3%. On a 12-month comparison, the August sales figures rose by 0.6% in the eurozone and 0.8% in the entire EU.
- 5 October 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs participated in the 8th Europe summit which was held in Brussels. The Summit was attended by forty-six Heads of State and Government from Europe and Asia

representing 58% of the world's population. The theme of the summit was "Quality of life, achieving greater well-being and more dignity for all citizens". Leaders addressed issues of mutual concern for Europe and Asia focusing on the global economic situation, sustainable development, global issues including piracy at sea, fighting terrorism and organised crime and dialogue between cultures, regional issues including the Middle East peace process and enhancing people to people contacts. 60% of world trade is carried out by Asia and Europe. The Deputy Prime Minister also held a bilateral meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam during which bilateral issues as well as Vietnam's relations with the European Union were discussed.

- **6 October 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela embarked on a state visit to Romania. On his arrival, he was welcomed by the State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Auresco, and the Ambassador of Romania Razvan Rusu. He was accompanied by Mrs Abela, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, Malta's ambassador for Romania Anthony Miceli Demajo and a business delegation.
- **6 October 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, said that between 2005 and 2009 there were 1,167 Maltese who got married to foreign nationals. There had been 252 in 2005, 224 in 2006, 255 in 2007, 203 in 2008 and 233 in 2009. The foreign brides or grooms came from about 92 countries. The Minister pointed out that the statistics did not include non-Catholic marriages, which were not registered.
- **6 October 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that between January and the end of September, the scheme to reduce fines and interest on unpaid income tax yielded €39,310,436.

7 October 2010 The European Commission delegation to Libya, led by Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström managed to reach an agreement with the Libyan authorities, which promised to not only assist Libya in improving the management of its borders, but also better access to international protection for asylum seekers. The agreement will provide up to €50 million over two years for specific projects to be implemented to reach this aim. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said he believed the agreement to be an initial but crucial step in the development of co-operation between Libya and the European Union on matters related to illegal immigration and augured that this will serve as a cornerstone for further positive developments in this field in the near future.

- **8 October 2010** The visible trade gap widened by €22.8 million in August when compared to the corresponding month last year, according to preliminary figures published by the Malta Statistics Office. The National Statistics Office said that provisional data for international trade show that the visible trade gap in August stood at €160.9 million, up by €22.8 million when compared to the corresponding month in 2009. There were increases in imports and exports of €69.2 million and €46.3 million respectively.
- **8 October 2010** While speaking during a seminar "Regional Development for Sustainable Tourism", organised by the Malta Business Bureau and the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, said that with growth rates of 12% and 20% in tourism performance and expenditure, respectively in the first eight months, Malta was performing much better than its close competitors, confirming that the country was on the right track. The Prime Minister warned that Malta, however could not be complacent in the face of positive results.

- **10 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, and H.E. Ahmad Bin Byat officially inaugurated the first office block at SmartCity Malta.
- **11 October 2010** Outbound tourism jumped by 9.5% in August compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said 31,441 overseas trips were made by Maltese residents, up by 9.5% when compared to the corresponding month last year. Trips to EU destinations stood at 26,545, while non-EU trips were estimated at 4,896. Overall trips towards EU destinations advanced by 13%, albeit a drop in Italian destinations was recorded. Trips to Non-EU destinations were down by 8%.
- **12 October 2010** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, addressed the conference to launch the Malta Aircraft Register Act. The Minister said that Malta's next step in the development of the aviation sector was the creation of one of the biggest aircraft registers in Europe.
- **12 October 2010** A total of 6,617 second hand vehicles were imported and registered in Malta between January and August, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, has told Parliament. Government revenue from registration and licensing amounted to €25,590,604 and €31,850,342 respectively.
- **12 October 2010** Malta experienced the second highest increase in taxes in the EU in the period between 2001 and 2008, according to a new study published by the European Commission. Although this increase is substantial, 4% of GDP, the Maltese taxpayers are still taxed significantly less than the average EU citizen. The study, Monitoring Tax Revenues And Tax Reforms In EU Member States 2010, focuses mostly on the development of taxation trends in the EU during that eight-year period when data is available and comparable for all member states. According to the study, Cyprus experienced the steepest rise in taxation in the EU, almost 8% of GDP, during this period. However, with a tax burden of 34.5% of GDP in 2008, Malta registered an increase of 4% on its 2001 levels, the second steepest increase among the 27 member states. The report also shows that contrary to Malta, the EU's average tax burden decreased, although by a mere 0.25%.
- **13 October 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment and the Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, announced a scheme subsidising loans to encourage hotels and restaurants to upgrade their establishments and offer new services. The Minister of Finance stressed the importance of continuous investment in the sector and said that the scheme, to be administered by Malta Enterprise, consisted in a subsidy on the interest rate on loans of between 1% and 3%.
- **13 October 2010** A total 97 primary schools last year voluntarily took part in Dinja Wahda, BirdLife and Bank of Valletta's environmental education project for schools. This was announced during the launch of this scholastic year's Dinja Wahda with a prize giving ceremony opened by the Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture. In celebration of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, Dinja Wahda will this year encourage teachers to focus on activities through which children will learn about biodiversity. Dr de Marco stated that projects like 'Dinja Wahda' increased awareness of the environment. Everyone had a personal responsibility towards the preservation of the environment and students should pursue with their commitment towards projects that improved it.
- **13 October 2010** The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, opened the 10th edition of the Sports Day for people with disabilities organised by

Method. All nine government centres, which are attended by 400 people with a disability, participated with a total of 250 people. The Parliamentary Secretary said that such an initiative, the aim of which was to put a smile on participants' faces and help them integrate competitively, enjoyed the government's support.

- **13 October 2010** The Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs hosted the 'Conference on Promoting Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation among Source, Transit and Destination Countries in Response to the Smuggling of Migrants' organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The aim of the Conference, in line with previous activities undertaken by UNODC, was to enhance international cooperation in combating smuggling of migrants, in particular by exchanging best practices in investigating and prosecuting migrant smuggling.
- **13 October 2010** New guidelines have been published laying down what consumers should expect from service providers in relation to contracts for the provision of fixed and mobile telephony, internet and television services. The guidelines were published by the Malta Communications Authority as part of its role of ensuring that end-users of electronic communications services are protected.
- **13 October 2010** Deposits in Maltese banks were up by almost 10% last year, standing at €16.8 billion, according to a report by the European Central Bank. The ECB publication, EU Report On Banking Structures, gave an overview of the financial institutions in the 27 member states. The financial sector managed €41.2 billion in assets, which represented a drop from the €42.3 billion in 2008.
- **14 October 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went down by 0.7% in September over the previous month, the National Statistics Office said. This primarily reflected a decrease of 6.7% in the Restaurants and Hotels Index, due to seasonally cheaper accommodation services.
- **14 October 2010** The number of commuters between Malta and Gozo rose by 8.4% in the third quarter this year when compared to the same period in 2009, with the Gozo Channel ferries carrying 1,351,298 passengers. The National Statistics Office said about 500,237, or 37% of the quarter total made the crossing in August. The number of vehicles carried by scheduled vessels went up 3.9%, to 344,457. The ferries made a total of 5,814 trips, a 2.9% increase, with 2,066 of them, or 35.5% of the total for the period, in August.
- **15 October 2010** The Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care in the Ministry for Social Policy, presented the elderly of the year award to Mr John Debono, a voluntary worker with Appogg since 2003. The ceremony, presided over by H.E. the President, George Abela, took place at the Palace in Valletta.
- **15 October 2010** A health diary 'Make Healthy Choices – Breast health is up to you' was launched during a press conference at Mater Dei Hospital, attended by, among others, Catherine Gonzi and Michelle Muscat, the Prime Minister's and Leader of the Opposition's wives', respectively. The Breast Care Support Group is a non-profit organisation that was formed in 1989 and is affiliated with Europa Donna, the European Breast cancer coalition which represents the interests of European woman regarding breast cancer to local and national authorities and to institutions of the European Union. The Coalition has affiliated member groups in 45 European countries.
- **16 October 2010** Households expenditure on food in the domestic market reached €606.6 million last year, according to statistics published by the National Statistics

Office on the occasion of World Food Week and World Food Day 2010. This year's theme was "United against hunger". In 2009, food expenditure was estimated to have dropped by 3.9%, to €606.6 million, over 2008. The share of household expenditure on food was estimated at 15.1% of total private final expenditure in the domestic market. Household spending was less on fish, bread and cereals, and meat. These dropped by €12.1 million, €5.7 million and €5 million, respectively, when compared to 2008. There was an increase in expenditure on vegetables and dairy products, 2.35% and 0.6%, respectively.

- **16 October 2010** The cruise liner industry contributed €62 million to the Maltese economy, according to a European study. The latest edition of the Contribution of Cruise Tourism to the Economies of Europe report, published by the European Cruise Council, places Valletta as the fourth most popular port of call, just below Naples, Leghorn and Nice. The 2009 edition of the report had put the direct economic impact at €65 million in 2008.
- **18 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, said he was in favour of leaving the decision on the introduction of divorce to the people through a "specific referendum" on the subject. While speaking during a tv programme, the Prime Minister said that the people's decision will have to be taken after parliament would have discussed the issue and after all Members of Parliament would have been given the opportunity to freely express their opinion on the matter. Dr Gonzi also said it would be wrong to link the divorce issue to a general election when people are expected to choose between one party and another.
- **18 October 2010** EU Finance Ministers reached an important deal on how the EU will monitor the administration of public finances by its member governments allowing also for the possibility of imposing sanctions against those member states which continue to ignore EU rules. The deal was announced by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy following eight hours of talks and tough negotiations among the 27 Finance Ministers in Luxembourg. The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, represented Malta.
- **18 October 2010** Cruise passengers visiting Malta declined by 17.4% last month compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said today. It said that total cruise passenger traffic was 51,154 in September. On average there were 1,550 passengers per vessel. Cruise passengers who were in transit amounted to 91.6% of the total 46,874, whereas those embarking from Malta totalled 2,146.
- **19 October 2010** Trolleymania.com, a new online shopping mall set up on the initiative of the IT Ministry, opened today featuring 37 shops with over 4,000 products. The venture is aimed at all local businesses which want to venture into the world of e-commerce and start selling their products online, the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said.
- **19 October 2010** The Hospital Management Committee at Saint Vincent De Paul Residence organised a special event for nine elderly residents who have reached the age of 100 years. Carmela Gauci, Maria Sacco, Maria Caruana, and Polly Vella are 100 years old, Natalizia Vella is 101 years old, while Lucia Cacciattolo and Paula Stafrace are 102 years old and Joan Zammit is 103. The eldest is Maria Concetta Ascolese who is 105. The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Elderly and Community Care presented gifts to the elderly on this special occasion.
- **19 October 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment said that during the first six months of this year there were 280 accidents at construction sites. The Minister said that the

National Statistics Office did not have any information on the nationality of the victims.

- **19 October 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that a total of 322 evictions were carried out between January 1, 2009 and the end of September this year. He said there had been 11 evictions in Gozo last year and four this year. The greatest number during the period under review was 56 from Valletta followed by 48 from St Paul's Bay.
- **20 October 2010** Total tax revenues last year amounted to €1,994.6 million, with a tax burden of 34.7%, the National Statistics Office said. Total tax revenue during 2009 went up by €27.3 million over the previous year, and stood at €1,994.6 million. The National Statistics Office said the increase came from higher revenues from direct taxes particularly income tax. During 2009, direct taxes went up by €51.6 million to €809.4 million, making up 40.6% of total tax revenue. Revenue from personal and corporate income tax went up by €40.3 million and €1.8 million respectively. Other current taxes increased by €10.6 million. On the other hand, revenue from indirect taxes saw a drop of €24.3 million to reach €833.4 million. This tax category is mainly made up of VAT and taxes on products (including excise duties), both of which exhibited a fall. Taxes on products declined by €26.0 million, whereas consumption taxes went down by €1.6 million. These declines were partly outweighed by higher income from other taxes on production. Social contributions stood at €351.8 million, or 17.6% of the total tax revenue.
- **21 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, delivered a speech during the re-delivery of the first easyJet plane to be serviced by SR Technics. The Prime Minister said that this was the evidence of the Maltese workers' ability and agility, pointing out that some of the workers up to last year worked at the dockyard, and others were unemployed.
- **21 October 2010** According to the results of a study commissioned by the Malta Communications Authority, some 97% of Maltese students aged between 8 and 15 years have access to the internet from home with more than 54% accessing it on a daily basis. The Malta Communications Authority said that according to its study, the use of internet varied depending on the age.
- **21 October 2010** While addressing the third Commonwealth Ministers' Forum on Public Sector Development, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, said that the public service depended on the employees at all levels. He said that Capacity-building at an institutional level is imperative for any public service to move forward and develop.
- **21 October 2010** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.68% in September, reflecting mostly an increase of 10.56% in the Clothing and Footwear Index, the National Statistics Office said. Higher prices of vegetables and bread caused the Food Index to go up by 1.38%. An increase of 0.71% was registered in the Household Equipment and House Maintenance Cost Index, mainly due to costlier items of furniture. Higher prices in respect of hygienic products caused an increase of 0.19% in the Personal Care and Health Index. The Water, Electricity, Gas and Fuels Index rose by 0.16%, mainly on account of higher gas prices. The Transport and Communication Index went down by 0.95%, mainly due to lower airfares. Cheaper travel articles caused the Other Goods and Services Index to fall by 0.15%. A decline of 0.13% was registered in the Recreation and Culture Index due to discounts on books. A fall in the price of beverages brought about a drop of 0.05% in the Beverages and Tobacco Index. In September, the twelve-month moving average rate of inflation stood at 0.80%, whereas the annual rate stood at 1.76%.

- 22 October 2010** The government's deficit for 2009 is estimated at €216.9 million, or 3.8% of GDP, the National Statistics Office said. The National Statistics Office said in a statement that last year, general government net borrowing was estimated at €216.9 million, down from a deficit of €273.7 million for 2008. General government deficit was equivalent to 3.8% of GDP, down from 4.8% for 2008.
- 22 October 2010** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, addresses the 22nd session of the National Information Society Advisory Council (NISCO) on Open Source Software and Promoting Openness.
- 22 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi visited Athens to take part in the launch of the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative. He was accompanied by Malta's ambassador for climate change, Michael Zammit Cutajar.
- 22 October 2010** The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, introduced first set of lectures for the Malta Tourism Authority Advanced Training Programme co-financed by the European Fund for Regional Development.
- 22 October 2010** Malta and Estonia were the only two EU member states out of the 27 which last year managed to reduce their structural deficit, Brussels said. On the other hand, all of the other 25 member states reported an increase in their deficit, some to quite high figures. On publishing the second notification by member states to the Commission on the state of their public finances in 2009, which is an obligation according to EU rules, Eurostat said that Malta ended 2009 with an impressive €57 million less in its deficit, a full 1% point, than in 2008.
- 23 October 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment and the People's Republic of China Commissioner Jie Xiao signed the Malta-China Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.
- 23 October 2010** Just over 51,000 fewer passengers travelled to or from Malta on a cruise liner last month when compared to the same month last year, a 17.4% drop. The National Statistics Office said the majority of visiting passengers hailed from EU countries, mainly Italy and France. They numbered 42,114, whereas the remaining 9,040 came from non-EU countries. The number of non-EU arrivals decreased by 24.2% over September 2009, with a 57.2% drop from the American market.
- 25 October 2010** The budget for 2011 was presented by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment.
- 26 October 2010** Total rainfall so far this month already made it the fifth wettest October since records started being kept in 1947, the Meteorological Office at the Malta International Airport, said.
- 26 October 2010** There were 303,761 licensed motor vehicles at the end of September, the National Statistics Office said. The National Statistics Office said that of these, 76.4% were private vehicles, while commercial vehicles accounted for 15.6%. A total of 4,152 new licences were issued in the third quarter, 3,353 of them for private vehicles.
- 26 October 2010** The perception of corruption in Malta is significantly down when compared to last year, according to the Corruption Perception Index for 2010 published in Brussels. According to the report, compiled by Transparency International, Malta recovered eight places in the 178-country ranking, placing 37th

in the list of least corrupt countries. In 2009 Malta was placed in the 45th position. On an EU level, Malta is being perceived at the 17th least corrupt member state out of the 27 with Italy, Poland and Hungary ranking in much worse positions than Malta.

- **26 October 2010** About 1,300 managers and supervisors working in the tourism sector will be able to obtain certification within two years under a new €3 million training programme run by the Malta Tourism Authority. The Advance, Training Tourism Leaders programme is funded by the government and the European Social Fund. Some 200 of those taking part will also be spending a week overseas with a foreign tourism company in the UK, Ireland or France. While speaking at the programme's launch, the Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, said that competitiveness in tourism was strengthened through human resources and people's abilities needed to be continuously renewed according to market needs.
- **27 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, inaugurated the new investment by Servgroup. The Maltese group, which produces aluminium, wood and stainless steel fixtures, is negotiating a franchising deal with a company in Dubai. The group was founded 20 years ago with just two employees and now had almost 80 people and invests €100,000 in machinery every year.
- **27 October 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Tripoli for talks with his Libyan counterpart Mousa Kousa. The talks focused on a friendship and cooperation agreement between the two countries.
- **28 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, attended the European Council Meeting in Brussels. He was accompanied by Malta's permanent representative for the EU Richard Cachia Caruana and the permanent secretary in the Finance Ministry Alfred Camilleri.
- **29 October 2010** Eurostat said that Malta has managed to reduce its annual unemployment rate by a full percentage point last September, the largest decrease registered among the 27 member states. On the other hand, the average unemployment rate in the euro area in September continued to rise reaching 10.1%, up from 9.6% a year earlier. Eurostat said that at 6.2%, Malta had the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the EU. In September 2009, Malta's unemployment rate stood at 7.2%. In September, the lowest unemployment rate in the EU, 4.4%, was observed in the Netherlands, while the highest, 20.8%, was registered in Spain.
- **30 October 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi said that he would be prepared to go back to the European Court of Justice over the issue of spring hunting to defend Malta's rights despite the risk of incurring millions of euros in fines. When asked whether the government would prefer to find a solution to the issue with the European Commission in order to avoid being hauled back before the European Courts of Justice, the Prime Minister said that this was not a question of risk but of rights.

NOVEMBER

- **1 November 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, briefed the media on the new Protection of Minors (Registration) Act.

- **1 November 2010** Expenditure on social security benefits rose by 6.3% between January and September, driven mainly by outlays on pensions in respect of retirement, pensions in respect of widowhood and the contributory bonus. The National Statistics Office said that total expenditure on social security benefits amounted to €533.7 million during the period, up by €31.7 million over the comparative period last year. This reflected mainly higher expenditure on contributory benefits, amounting to €28.1 million. Non-contributory benefits rose by €3.6 million.
- **2 November 2010** in reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that Malta has paid more than €98 million in interest on government stock, treasury bills and foreign loans between January and June this year.
- **2 November 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health the Elderly and Community Care, attended the launch of the Hand Hygiene Campaign. The Minister said that one in ten patients who go to hospital acquires an infection and that this happened because staff and other people did not wash their hands. The problem was EU-wide and very worrying.
- **2 November 2010** Malta has become a member of the Eurostars programme, a pan-European initiative spread across 33 countries aimed at stimulating companies, particularly SMEs, to lead international collaborative research projects by easing access to support and funding. With a fund of €400 million, of which €300 million is contributed by the participating states and €100 million by the European Union, the initiative brings together companies from different countries to work on a research project that is market-driven.
- **2 November 2010** Last month was the third wettest October since 1951, according to Meteorological Office records. The Meteorological Office said in a statement that following the heavy precipitation on October 24 and 25 and the additional rainfall over Luqa Airport in the rest of the month, a 230mm of rainfall was registered.
- **3 November 2010** The Maltese government has appealed against the Iranian government's death sentence to Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani. In a statement, the government said it was joining the EU's High Commissioner's request to the Iranian government and appealed for the execution not to be carried out. Sakineh was originally sentenced to death by stoning after being charged with adultery. She was later accused of complicity in the murder of her husband and the sentence was changed to death by hanging.
- **3 November 2010** Tourist arrivals in September grew by 15.2% when compared to last year, figures issued by the National Statistics Office show. Total nights spent during this period went up by 16.8%.
- **3 November 2010** Just under 2,000 people had their social benefit claims stopped in the first half of this year, information given by the Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment and the Family in Parliament, shows. Details show that the biggest group, 119, live in St Paul's Bay, followed by residents of Qormi, Valletta, Cospicua and Zebbug. 2,918 claims were stopped in the whole of last year.
- **4 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said that 26.7% of the total number of births at Mater Dei Hospital during the first nine months of this year were to unmarried mothers aged between 14 and 42. The Minister said that there were 2,567 births of which 685 were to unmarried mothers and 131 of these were to mothers between 14

and 19. The highest number of monthly births to unmarried mothers, 105, was during September.

- **4 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, said that the number of expectant mothers who were students under the age of 18 was 147, of whom 16 were under 16 years of age.
- **4 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said that during the first three quarters of the year there were 208 people who were admitted to hospital because of alcohol abuse. Of these, 3 were under 15 years of age and 28 between 15 and 24. People admitted to hospital because of drug overdose amounted to 217, of whom 24 were under 15 and 50 between the ages of 15 and 24.
- **4 November 2010** Over 2.2 million visitors visited the Malta Pavillion at the Shanghai Expo, which closed after six months, the Malta Enterprise said. The Malta Enterprise said that such exposure provided an ideal opportunity to promote Malta and thereby enhance the possibility of increased visits from within this market, whether for leisure or business purposes.
- **4 November 2010** Relations between Malta and Libya were excellent and there were good prospects for the signing of a Malta-Libya Friendship and Partnership Agreement, the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, said in Parliament. The possible agreement was discussed when the Minister visited Tripoli for talks with his counterpart Mousa Kousa.
- **4 November 2010** Passenger traffic through Malta International Airport increased by 18.4% last month over October 2009 to reach 331,910, the highest number ever registered in October, the Malta International Airport said. It was the first time that October had exceeded the 300,000th mark. Seat capacity was of 459,659, an increase of 17.1% over October 2009. Aircraft movements grew by 15.4% over the corresponding period last year, whilst the average seat load factor was also on the increase, reaching 72.2%, up from the 71.4% registered in October 2009.
- **5 November 2010** The Hon. Clyde Puli, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, officially opened the Ta' Qali Open Air Fitness Centre. At this centre, anyone can do a complete work out free of charge at any time of the day. Mr Puli said the centre was part of the government's strategy to promote regular physical activity as a lifestyle for a healthier society. The centre includes fitness bikes, ski machines, treadmills, a double station lat pull down, a double station chest press, a cross trainer, dips, an abdominal bench, a double station leg press, tai chi and a multi stretch point.
- **5 November 2010** The registered unemployment in September decreased by 866 people when compared to the corresponding month last year, but increased by 66 over August, the National Statistics Office said. The National Statistics Office said that in the 12-month period to September, the number of registered unemployed dropped by 11.5% and reached 6,655, despite an increase of 1% when compared to the previous month. The number of registered unemployed in Malta totalled 5,980, whereas an additional 675 persons were registered in Gozo.
- **5 November 2010** The Hon. Chris Said was sworn in as Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, in a ceremony at the Palace, just six weeks after resigning over perjury charges of which he has since been cleared. Dr Said was given his former responsibilities for public dialogue, local

government and consumer affairs. Accompanied by his family, Dr Said said he looked forward to returning to his job as Parliamentary Secretary and continue working on the programme he had embarked upon.

- **5 November 2010** Talks with European bus and train operator Arriva over reform of the bus service have been concluded. Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt announced that the new service will officially start on 3rd July 2011.
- **5 November 2010** The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, said that last month was the best September ever recorded, saying the 150,000 visitors surpassed the figure for the same month in 2008, which was a good year for tourism. The number, released by the National Statistics Office, signifies an increase of 15.2% in tourist arrivals over September 2009. It is also the fourth consecutive month of this year that has registered a record number of visitors.
- **5 November 2010** The EU was to provide €4.8 million for projects related to the issue of illegal immigration, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs announced in Parliament. Speaking during the Budget debate, he said these funds were to be given under the EU external borders fund, the refugee fund and the repatriation fund.
- **6 November 2010** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said that the Controlled Vehicle Access (CVA) system for Valletta, was not working properly. While speaking at a seminar on Valletta hosted by the Valletta Alive Foundation, the Minister explained that despite the CVA, more cars were going into Valletta, when the aim was to have fewer vehicles, particularly in the historic core. Yet out of the majority of those who went to Valletta, 67% used the buses. 60% per cent of people who travelled to Valletta by bus went there to shop, while 55% of those who travelled by car went to Valletta to work, which meant that they left their car in Valletta or nearby and occupied a parking slot.
- **6 November 2010** President George Abela, presided over the launching of a new publication entitled: `Tisjir mill-qalb`, compiled by 9 renowned chefs in aid of L-Istrina 2010.
- **6 November 2010** A concert in honour of the late President Emeritus Guido de Marco was hosted by Foreign Minister Tonio Borg and Mrs Borg at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Valletta. The evening began with the inauguration of a library dedicated to Prof. de Marco at the Ministry, where the late President had served as foreign Minister for a number of years. Prof. de Marco's widow, Violet and Dr Borg unveiled a commemorative plaque. The late President's children and other members of Prof. De Marco's immediate family attended the concert. Also present were Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Ambassadors, Presidents Emeriti and members of the Maltese Diplomatic Corps.
- **7 November 2010** Malta climbed five places in a year in a UN quality of life report which highlighted major concerns about air quality in the country. The island is considered to have 'very high human development', ranking 33rd in the UN Human Development Index, which measures wealth, life expectancy and education in 169 countries.
- **8 November 2010** The rate of mistakes in the migration of water and electricity bills to the new system between January and October was 5.3%, the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications said in Parliament. He said

that the current problems with regard to the billing of water and electricity did not stem from the setting up of Arms Ltd but the billing system.

- **8 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited Smart Light Systems. The Maltese company, which produces LED lights and has Airbus among its clients, announced plans for expansion. Smart Light Systems offers some of the most effective ways to save money on electricity bills, with a 1 Watt LED (light emitting diode) producing the same amount of light as a 20-Watt halogen bulb. Translated into Euro, each SmartLight Systems LED saves the consumer anything between €20 to €25 each year on each bulb, resulting in savings of up to an average €500 every year on the electricity bill of a small business using 20 bulbs.
- **8 November 2010** Non-fatal accidents at work increased by 3.4% in the third quarter of this year when compared to the corresponding period last year, the National Statistics Office said. 2 fatal accidents at work were also reported in the quarter under review, 1 more than in the same period last year. The Office said that 915 persons had an accident in the course of their work between July and September. The number of accidents increased by 30, 3.4% over the corresponding period in 2009. The majority of non-fatal accidents at work, 22.6%, occurred in manufacturing, 18.5% in construction and 12% in wholesale and retail trade.
- **8 November 2010** Church schools are owed € 8,246,407 by the Government, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, said in Parliament. She said that the arrears had accumulated as follows: 2003 - €2,325,557.88; 2004 - €1,749,575.33; 2005 - €1,089,073.45, 2006 - €78,571.98; 2007 - €29,389.33; 2008 - €1,502,482.00 and 2009 - €1,364,758.00. The Minister said that reconciliation still had to be made for some of the arrears and that once this is completed, agreement would be reached on the payment of these arrears.
- **8 November 2010** The Hon Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, addressed a press conference on the occasion of World Radiography Day.
- **8 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that the sum of €20 million has been spent on the installation of smart meters and this was according to the payment plan agreed between IBM, Enemalta and Water Services Corporation. He said various measures were taken, including the small scale implementation plan and its evaluation and the installation of some 38,000 metres. There were another 44,157 metres in Enemalta's warehouse. The Minister said that the installation of smart meters started with a pilot project in May 2009, during which 5,000 smart meters were installed. He said that the installation was moving according to plan and all meters were expected to be changed within three years.
- **8 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, said that there were 22,648 families who received children allowances, of whom 4,157 of the recipients were unmarried mothers. There were 18,627 other families that received a fixed rate children's allowance as they exceed an annual income of €23,923. Of these 113 were unmarried mothers. The Minister said that there were 2,940 families and unmarried mothers who received an allowance because of family members suffering from diabetes. Of these, 19 men and a woman receive social benefits for single parents. 6,665 and 787 recipients, in Malta and Gozo respectively, received social benefits because of high blood pressure. Minister Cristina said that between January and October, 1,994 women received maternity benefits. Of these 656 were single mothers.

- 8 November 2010** Unemployment dropped by 11.5% in September compared to the same month last year although it rose by 1% over August this year, according to the National Statistics Office. The number of registered unemployed totalled 5,980 in Malta and 675 in Gozo, declines of 771 and 95 respectively. The drops were observed across all age groups. The unemployment rate, excluding part-timers, stood at 5% of the labour supply in April. For men it was 5.8% and 3.4% for women.
- 8 November 2010** There were 257 senior citizens in private residential homes under the public private partnership, costing the government the sum of €1,434,281, Health Minister Joe Cassar said in reply to a parliamentary question. The Minister gave the number of residents in the respective home as at July and the amount spent by the government for the January-July period.
- 8 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that 117,631 accounts benefitted from the energy allowance, the least of which was €55. Answering a parliamentary question, the Minister said that 53,170 accounts received an allowance of less than €100 and there were 64,461 accounts which received more than €100. 3,892 accounts did not benefit from any allowance because they use more than 10,000 electricity units, and 24,994 families did not qualify because they received social benefits.
- 9 November 2010** The Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered opening address at the Alliance of Civilizations Regional Ministerial Meeting. Foreign Ministers and ambassadors from European and Arab countries met in Malta to discuss regional cooperation aimed at strengthening bridges between peoples and communities by promoting inter-cultural dialogue. The meeting has been organised by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and focused on a regional strategy on inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation for the Mediterranean.
- 9 November 2010** The visible trade gap in September stood at €146.9 million, up by €72.8 million when compared to the corresponding month in 2009, the National Statistics Office said. It said that imports and exports were up by €85.2 million and €12.4 million respectively. The increase in imports was mainly due to capital goods, industrial supplies and fuels and lubricants, while a decrease was registered in consumer goods. Transport equipment accounted for the main increase in exports during September when compared to the corresponding month last year.
- 10 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited the new investment undertaken by Portman International. The Maltese company, owned by a Maltese family and run by a Maltese management team, was set up in London in 1986 providing small clientele with accountancy and company formation services. The company expanded and after relocating its back office operation to Malta in 1997, it moved its head offices here in 2002 and eventually opened a second satellite office in Dublin to support its international client base in addition to the London office and the Malta head office. The company services an international client base with professional, accounting, tax, fiduciary and trading support services.
- 11 November 2010** Armistice Day, the anniversary of the end of the First World War, was marked with two events in Valletta. Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna held a ceremony at the Upper Barrakka Gardens which included the firing of the guns from the saluting battery. At the Siege Bell memorial, a 'Poppy Day' commemoration was held for school children, where there was singing, poetry reading and other events to focus attention on the Great War, the Second World War and other conflicts in the world. Poppy wreaths were laid on the monument. Parliamentary Assistant Stephen Spiteri attended.

- **11 November 2010** President George Abela visited the General Soft Drinks Factory. During his visit, he was presented with a donation of €41,550 for the Malta Community Chest Fund, raised by the company and the workers in an activity during the summer.
- **11 November 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said in Parliament that Mater Dei Hospital is estimated to have consumed €3,948,000 worth of electricity in the first nine months of this year. He said the bill was €83,000 per week in the first three months of this year, €80,000 per week in the second quarter and €141,000 per week in the third quarter. The Minister said these were estimates since the bills sent so far were up to the beginning of March.
- **12 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited Hotel Phoenicia in view of their upcoming expansion project. The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture was in attendance.
- **12 November 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, visited Defined Branding, a 3D design and web development company based in San Gwann. The company, set up two years ago, is investing €174,000 to expand its operations. A quarter of the investment is being made through European Regional Development Funds. The ERDF funds enabled the company to employ more specialised workers, who were enabling it to create new niches and markets. It was also carrying out more of its work in-house, making it more competitive. The Parliamentary Secretary said that employment was central to government policy and it wanted to continue creating the best environment for its enterprises, 97% of which were micro.
- **12 November 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, announced the 13 beneficiaries of a Scheme for Administrative Committees. Addressing a news conference, he said that the projects included maintenance of gardens and public spaces, road repair, rehabilitation of rural zones and traffic management. Some projects include measures to increase safety and others use alternative energy. The committees that will be benefitting are those of Fleur de Lys, Swatar, Sta Lucija, Hal Farrug, Xlendi, Bahar ic-Caghaq, Bahrija, Tal-Virtu, Kappara, Burmarrad, Madliena, Marsalforn and Bubaqra.
- **12 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, addressed a press conference giving details about the Car Scrapping Scheme. He said that a maximum of 2,000 people would be benefitting up to a maximum of €2,000 each. Mr Fenech explained that to benefit one had to scrap a car that was over 10 years and which would have still been licenced as at October 26. Applicants would be given a rebate of up to 15.25% on the cost, insurance and freight of the new car. The scheme was also open to first time buyers of a new car, who did not have an old one to scrap. These, however, would only benefit from up to €1,000, with the remaining sum being allocated to a special fund for the cars to be scrapped. The Minister said that this should encourage first time buyers who did not have a car to scrap to buy one and apply for the scheme themselves.
- **12 November 2010** While speaking on the occasion of World Diabetes Day, the Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, said that the prevalence of diabetes was very high in Malta and according to the European Health Interview Survey of 2008, 9.2% of the population knew they had diabetes, of which 6% were being treated medically.
- **12 November 2010** The number of Malta residents visiting EU destinations in September was estimated at 29,738. Those visiting non-EU countries numbered 5,481.

Both EU and non-EU markets registered increases over 2009. These increases were in trips to Italy and France, while trips to the UK and Germany registered a decline. The amount of outbound passengers recorded between January and September was 215,623, up by 7% when compared to last year. Trips to EU countries comprised 85% of the total and stood at 183,792. Unlike previous years, the most popular destination was Italy. Trips to EU destinations had an average length of stay of 7.2 nights, while the average for non-EU countries stood at 12.8 nights. The number of same-day visitors was estimated at 24,715. The majority of trips, 56%, were undertaken for holiday purposes. The total budgeted expenditure planned by outbound tourists during these nine months stood at €209 million, with an average expenditure of €969.5 per person.

- **12 November 2010** Malta doubled oil imports between 1996 and 2007, when the country's energy consumption and demand for transport fuel soared. While energy consumption in the EU rose by an average of 0.4% annually during the period, Malta increased its demand tenfold to about 4% per year, according to data published in Brussels in a new report on EU Cohesion Funds. The countries with similar scenarios were Spain and Ireland but Malta saw the largest increase among all 27 EU member states. Oil imports went up from 984,000 tons in 1999 to 1,800,000 tons by 2007. When calculated per capita, while in 1999 every Maltese resident used 2.6 tons of oil every year, by 2007 this grew to 4.58 tons a year.
- **13 November 2010** Two fatal accidents were reported at places of work between July and September, one more than in the same quarter of the previous year. The number of non-fatal accidents went up by 30, or 3.4%, bringing the total to 915. Elementary occupations accounted for 47% of the total.
- **14 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, and the Hon. Mario Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care officially inaugurated the Zejtun Night Shelter for the elderly at the Jesus of Nazareth Convent in Zejtun. The shelter, a church-public initiative, may house up to eight elderly, who opt to continue living in the community, during the night. It is a pilot project in which the government has invested €92,657 and to which it will be contributing €5,000 a year towards its operation. The centre is being run by nuns.
- **14 November 2010** The Hon Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family delivered the opening speech at the conference on fostering entitled 'Home - Where I belong?'. The Minister said that since fostering started in Malta in 1996 the number of foster parents has been on the increase. A total of 26 children were fostered 14 years ago. The figure has slowly risen and reached 193 children by October this year. Of these, 72 were being fostered by relatives.
- **15 November 2010** Mgr Nikol Cauchi, Emeritus Bishop of Gozo, passed away, aged 81. Mgr Cauchi served as Bishop for 38 years until his retirement in 2006.
- **15 November 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, launched the "Majjal ta' Malta" brand. The Minister said that the Majjal ta' Malta label was aimed at encouraging consumers to opt for fresh and genuine Maltese pork. The label will appear on the product and as a sticker at shops selling Maltese pork. The Minister said the government and producers were working together to ensure that the pork industry remained sustainable.
- **15 November 2010** President George Abela inaugurated Fine Arts Auction in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund as part of the activities of L-Istrina mill-Qalb.
- **15 November 2010** The trade gap widened by €72.8 million in September to reach €146.9 million for the month, with the value of imports growing by €85.2 million and of

exports by €12.4 million, according to the latest official statistics. The increase in the value of imports was mainly due to capital goods, industrial supplies and fuels and lubricants. A drop was registered in consumer goods, the National Statistics Office has said. Machinery and transport equipment accounted for the main increase in exports. In the first nine months of the year, the visible trade gap narrowed by €145 million to €964.7 million as a result of an increase in the value of exports of €423.7 million, offsetting a €278 million rise in the value of imports.

- **16 November 2010** The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices went down by 0.6% last month when compared to September. This primarily reflected a decrease of 7.15 in the Restaurants and Hotels Index, due to seasonally cheaper accommodation services, the National Statistics Office said.
- **16 November 2010** The Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, officially opened the 7th edition of the Careers Convention organised by KSU and AEISEC.
- **17 November 2010** The Hon Peter Micallef, Parliamentary Assistant at the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care, addressed a conference on the occasion of World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day. Chronic obstructive lung disease kills one person every 10 seconds globally, according to international studies.
- **17 November 2010** There were a total of 2,957 cases of child abuse reported to the Appogg agency in the three years between 2007 and 2009. In order of numbers, the primary types of abuse were of children at risk, emotional, carelessness, physical, sexual and other unspecified. In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family said most people reported more than one type of abuse.
- **17 November 2010** There were 185 people charged with sexual abuse of children in the four years between 2006 and 2009. Answering a parliamentary question, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said that there were 38 in 2006, 45 in 2007, 42 in 2008 and 60 in 2009. Cases decided and sentences handed down had been 20, 15, 16 and 20 respectively. There were 17, 28, 26 and 40 cases that were still pending. One suspect passed away in 2006 and two others in 2007.
- **18 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, visited Icon. The web solutions provider Icon is investing in product and technical innovation, research and development and additional human resources to assist the company to expand further locally and overseas. The company, which employs 25 web experts, has launched an application Icon.travel, which provides companies operating in the travel industry with an integrated web product that streamlines operations and allows services to be offered online.
- **18 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, presided over the signing of a 5 year agreement between MSC and VISET plc at the Valletta Waterfront. The Prime Minister praised MSC for their confidence in Malta and for having recognised the island's potential.
- **18 November 2010** 310.3 million sms messages were sent in Malta in the first half of this year, compared to 242.4 million in the first half of 2009, a report by the Malta Communications Authority shows. Mobile telephony subscriptions totalled 439,536 as at the end of June 2010, representing an increase of 8.7% over the corresponding figure in 2009. Most subscriptions, at 81.2%, continued to be prepaid.

- 18 November 2010** The Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communication, visited the Falcon Aviation Engineering Limited. The company, set up 17 years ago, is planning an investment of €1.5 million in the construction of another hangar. This expansion is the result of strong demand from owners of small aircraft for the services of the company, which offers aircraft maintenance, periodic inspections, aircraft overhauls, anti-corrosion treatment and interior refurbishment on aircraft with a maximum weight of 5,700.
- 18 November 2010** Cruise passenger traffic in October increased by 3.8% over the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that cruise passengers who were in transit amounted to 55,558 whereas those landing in Malta totalled 1,584. Passengers fell mostly in the 60-79 age bracket and stood at 24,401, followed by those in the 40-59 age group. On average there were 1,399 cruise passengers per vessel. 45,201 passengers came from EU countries, mainly from Italy and France, whereas those from non-EU countries amounted to 13,543.
- 18 November 2010** Malta increased its exports to the US by €27 million during the first half of this year when compared to 2009. New Eurostat figures issued in Brussels show that between January and June of this year, the value of Maltese exports to the US reached €90 million. During the same period last year the amount of Maltese exports to the biggest economy of the world amounted to €63 million. An improvement was also registered on the imports side although in this case Malta still enjoys a healthy trade balance. During the first half of this year, Malta imported a total of €43 million from the US, up by €5 million over the same period of 2009. Maltese exports to the US consist mostly of electronics.
- 18 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communication, said that between May 1, 2006 and April 30, 2007, before the advent of the controlled vehicular access (CVA) system, the number of vehicles licensed to enter Valletta was 25,030.
- 18 November 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that the aquaculture industry in Malta produced 6,726,843 kilos of tuna, sea bream and sea bass in 2008, down from the 8,589,252 kilos in 2007. He said the industry had produced 5,125,995 kilos in 2005 and 7,164,434 kilos in 2006. The figures for 2009 were still being collated.
- 19 November 2010** H.E. Mr Antonio Tajani, Vice President in the Directorate General for Industry and Entrepreneurship of the European Commission, delivered the keynote speech during the Plenary Session of the European Tourism Forum Conference held today in Malta. The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, delivered the closing speech on the occasion. During his speech, the Prime Minister said that something needs to be done to reduce the bureaucracy in the issuing of visas while giving consideration to the security aspect. He said that it was useless investing millions in the product if one could not provide the key for tourists to travel. The Hon. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, said that there should never be a barrier to tourism.
- 19 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, welcomed a group of students from Sacred Heart School at the Ministry. The students were given a tour of the Foreign Ministry by the Minister himself.
- 19 November 2010** The gross output of the aquaculture industry last year, including fish farming, amounted to €76.4 million, a drop of 6.4% from €81.7 million in 2008. This was mainly due to a decline of 57% in the value of exported tuna. The National Statistics Office said the volume of fresh fish amounted to 5,188 tonnes, or 22.9% less

than in 2008. Complementing this drop in volume was a 37.7% decrease in the average price of fresh fish, to €8.69.

- **19 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, launched the Create Scheme. The Minister said that those benefitting would be able to get 60% tax credit or up to €25,000 of the costs towards the development of a business, intellectual property, the development of artistic work and translations.
- **20 November 2010** H.E. Mr Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary, was in Malta on a two day working visit. The Minister paid a courtesy call on President George Abela at the Palace and later had talks with the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, and with the Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- **21 November 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs visited activities at Salini National Park as part of the Tree Planting Weekend, during which, the public had the opportunity to adopt and plant a tree against a small fee. The Minister said that 95,000 trees were planted over the past five years and it was hoped that the 100,000th tree would be planted this year.
- **22 November 2010** The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and H.E. Douglas Kmiec, Ambassador for the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance aviation security. The US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) would be providing Malta with equipment to scan cargo and luggages and would provide additional operational support for security screening at Malta International Airport.
- **22 November 2010** Unemployment dropped by 637 in October to reach 6,696 when compared to the same month last year, the National Statistics Office said. It said there were 6,013 registered unemployed in Malta and 683 in Gozo. However the number of unemployed increased by 41 between September and October. This change, the National Statistics Office said, was mainly attributable to a rise in the number of women registering for work. 5,281 men were registering for work, with the majority aged 45 and over. Among women, the number of registered unemployed during October 2010 amounted to 1,415. Year on year, the number of persons registering for work for less than 20 weeks dropped by 8.0% and persons who had been registering for work for 21-52 weeks decreased by 22.5%. The majority of men sought occupations related to services, sales and crafts whereas women sought clerical and service-oriented occupations.
- **23 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment officially switched on the Christmas lights in Republic Street.
- **23 November 2010** The registration of imported second hand vehicles between January and October this year was almost twice that of new vehicles, information given in parliament by the Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications shows. He said that 4,575 new vehicles and 8,282 second vehicles had been registered.
- **23 November 2010** President George Abela presided over the press conference Paqpaqli ghall-Istrina announcing the 5million euro Lamborghini to be displayed during the event.
- **23 November 2010** The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications visited the Malta Freeport on the erection of the 100th crane provided by Motherwell Bridge Malta Ltd. The company has had significant export

success, but its milestone was celebrated at Malta Freeport, which is taking 50 of the company's cranes.

- **23 November 2010** The Retail Price Index went up by 0.73% to 102.39 last month from 101.65 in September. The National Statistics Office said in a statement today that this primarily reflected an increase of 14.23% in the Clothing and Footwear Index, due to seasonally higher prices of garments.
- **23 November 2010** The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, said that encouraging results are emerging from ongoing oil exploration around Malta. Active petroleum systems had been identified at the most recent oil wells being explored, he said. However, government sources said this did not mean oil had been struck in any economically viable quantities. All it meant was that experts had found the geological layers required for there to be oil.
- **23 November 2010** The Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, and H.E. Mr. Douglas Kmiec Ambassador of the United States, signed and exchanged the instruments of ratification for the convention for the avoidance of double taxation between the two countries.
- **24 November 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care and Mrs Kate Gonzi visited the National Breast Screening Centre on the occasion of its first Anniversary. The breast screening programme has also been extended to Gozo. While speaking at the centre in Valletta, the Minister welcomed the fact that 68.8% of women aged between 50 and 60 who had been invited for screening had actually turned up. He said that of the 7,075 who underwent the mammogram, 687 were recalled for further investigation. 45 women were found to have early stages of cancer, with a big possibility of recovery.
- **24 November 2010** Jobs, wages and hours worked in the construction sector in the third quarter of this year fell by 8.1%, 2.2% and 9.5% respectively when compared to the corresponding period of 2009, the National Statistics Office said. It said that year-on-year data showed that employment in construction activities fell by 8.1%, mainly on account of a general decline in employment in the construction of buildings (-8.3%), in civil engineering (-5.7%) and in specialised construction activities (-8.3%).
- **25 November 2010** There are currently 85,185 licensed firearms and 11,457 licensed weapons, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said in Parliament. 54,289 are shotguns, 8,976 are pistols, 5,370 are rifles and 5,146 are revolvers. The list also includes 16 cannons, 302 machine-guns, three mortars, 1,453 muzzle guns, 140 paintballs and 245 sub-machine guns. The firearms list also features six walking sticks. The list of weapons includes 91 bows, nine arrows, 7,002 harpoons, 1,746 swords and 77 spears.
- **25 November 2010** Museums and historical sites received 1.8 million visitors last year, a drop of 12% from the preceding year, the National Statistics Office said. No reason was given, although the main reason is thought to have been the decline in tourism. Even though the number of paid visits to museums and sites slipped, there was an increase in revenue, with the sites gleaning more off admission fees and €1 million more from grants and subsidies.
- **25 November 2010** The number of registered unemployed dropped by 8.7% over the past year, according to official statistics. The jobless now total 6,013 in Malta and 683 in Gozo.

- **26 November 2010** A foundation to promote the better appreciation of the life and works of two of Malta's political giants, Fortunato and Enrico Mizzi, was formed by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi and Mgr Fortunato Mizzi, who is Enrico's son. The foundation will also preserve the archives of the Mizzis and ensure that they are accessible for research purposes.
- **26 November 2010** A steering committee which brings together the government, Air Malta, the trade unions and consultants in the aviation sector, got down to the details of a rescue plan for the airline during the first of what are expected to be weekly meetings. The Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, stressed that real solutions had to be found for the real problems of Air Malta. While addressing the annual general meeting of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, Dr de Marco said that Air Malta was of strategic importance for Malta and it was essential that it could fly its colours proudly and strongly, while also being financially sound.
- **26 November 2010** The government's financial deficit in the first 10 months of this year was €339.5 million, an increase of €11.5 million over the same period last year, the National Statistics Office said.
- Recurrent revenue rose by €121.0 million, but that was offset by a rise in total expenditure of €132.5 million.
- **26 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, delivered the opening address at the first meeting of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The office, which will be responsible to coordinate the efforts of EU member states on asylum and to improve the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, is expected to generate a lucrative economic spin off in the Maltese economy with an initial budget of €40 million to be spent during the first three years of operation.
- **28 November 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, said that the European Commission's decision to close proceedings against Malta over the power station extension contract meant that truth had prevailed. Dr Gonzi was speaking at a political conference in Mgarr. He pointed out that the contract had been investigated by the Auditor-General, who found no corruption. The Auditor-General was currently replying to questions on his findings before the Public Accounts Committee, Dr Gonzi observed.
- **29 November 2010** A European Economic Forecast issued praised Malta for a stronger than expected rebound in the first half of 2010. The recession in Malta started at the end of 2008 and lasted three quarters. Its total impact in terms of real GDP contraction over 2009 was one of the mildest in the euro area, at 2.1% compared to 4.1% for the euro-area average. The decline in exports, together with the sharp retrenchment of investment, mainly machinery and housing construction, and the depletion of inventories were the key drivers of the decline in real GDP in 2009. The report says that the slower growth of real GDP in the second quarter this year, 0.1% compared to 1.4% in the first quarter, may be indicative of a slowdown in the momentum of economic recovery.
- **29 November 2010** Hotels and other tourist accommodation in September saw an increase of 10.5% in arrivals, compared to the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that total arrivals in collective accommodation amounted to 130,421. The average length of stay during the month stood at 6.4 nights.

- **29 November 2010** The Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs signed a bilateral agreement with H.E. Dr Michael Spindelegger, Federal Minister of International and European Affairs of Austria.
- **30 November 2010** Sixty nine persons died tragically between January and October this year, information given in Parliament shows. The Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said that during the period, there were 28 suicides, 14 traffic fatalities, 21 'other' fatalities, three victims of overdoses, two murders and another case where the circumstances are still being established. In reply to another question, the Minister said that a total of 49 reports of rapes and violent indecent assault were made to the police in the first 10 months of this year. The reports were made all over Malta and Gozo.
- **30 November 2010** Meteo Malta said that November 2010 was the second driest November since its rainfall records started being kept in 1985. This was a contrast to the previous two months, particularly October, which was one of the wettest Octobers on record. November 2010 received only around 10% of the average total rainfall for the month with only 11.6mm compared to the average of 108.6mm. The driest November ever was in 1992 with 6.9mm. With a mean temperature of 18.7 °C, November 2010 was also 0.7°C warmer than average. The warmest November on record was that of 1992 with a mean temperature of 19.5 °C while the coolest was that of 1998 with a mean temperature of 16.1°C.

DECEMBER

- **01 December 2010** The government launched a process with various sectors of the economy with a view to reducing government-induced and compliance costs for businesses. The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information in the Office of the Prime Minister, said that the aim was to reduce the administrative burden for businesses by 12% by 2012. The project is being coordinated by the Management Efficiency Unit, which is benefiting from EU funds for the purpose.
- **01 December 2010** Tourist arrivals in October increased by 17.9% when compared to the corresponding month last year, the National Statistics Office said. Total nights spent during the same period advanced by 18.2%.
- **01 December 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, had a meeting with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi at the end of the third EU-Africa summit held in Tripoli. The meeting was held just before Dr Gonzi left the Libyan capital after attending the final session of the summit, which brought together about 80 leaders from Europe and Africa. The two discussed Malta's role as a lobby for Mediterranean issues within the EU and spoke about issues of interest to both countries.
- **01 December 2010** In the seven years since 2004 the government sold €673,439,280 worth of assets, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment told Parliament in reply to a parliamentary question. The assets were the National Lottery and Malta Freeport Terminals in 2004; sales of shares in Malta International Airport, Middle Sea Insurance, Eutelsat, Fort Chambray and Pender Place in 2005; Maltacom shares in 2006; Tug Malta Ltd and shares in Maltapost plc in 2007; Maltapost pls (initial public offering), 60 per cent of shareholding in Maltapost and Enemalta LPG concession in 2008; the redemption of 1,200,000 shares in VASET in 2009; and Transport Malta's Mgarr Gozo Marina, the Ship Repair Yard and Manoel

Island Yacht Yard to date in 2010. The Minister pointed out that the proceeds from Malta Freeport Terminals included payments that were still to be made.

- **02 December 2010** November was the sixth driest since 1923, the Meteorological Office at Malta International Airport said. Precipitation was just 19.2mm compared to the November norm of 80mm. The wettest November was in 1999 when rainfall totalled 420.3mm.
- **02 December 2010** According to the latest scoreboard published by the European Commission in Brussels, Malta is still topping the charts when it comes to subsidies and state aid despite the closure of Malta Shipyards last year. The scoreboard shows that, in 2009, Malta was the most generous member state out of the 27 in granting aid to industry and services out of taxpayers' money. The amount of state aid, excluding transport and agriculture, last year reached 1.7% of GDP, or about €100 million. Hungary came a close second with 1% of GDP. The EU average stood at 0.5% of GDP, a third of the aid granted by Malta.
- **03 December 2010** In 2009 there were 67 firms in Malta and one in Gozo employing more than 250 people each, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said in reply to a parliamentary question. The number of such firms in Malta in 2000 had started out at 55, fluctuating to a peak of 68 in 2007. In Gozo there had been two firms in 2000 and 2001, but since 2002 there had been only one firm employing more than 250 people.
- **04 December 2010** Illegal immigration, including the burden sharing agreement and repatriation efforts, were discussed during a visit to Malta by French Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux. M. Hortefeux had meetings with the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. The Home Affairs Ministry in a statement pointed out that almost 400 beneficiaries of international protection from Malta were reallocated to other European Union countries in the past year through the European Re-Allocation for Malta (EUREMA) pilot project. The ministers agreed that the Pact on Immigration and Asylum has achieved its aim of putting immigration firmly on the agenda of the European Union, so much so that this subject always features in meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs Council.
- **04 December 2010** Government revenue in the first 10 months went up by €121 million but this was offset by a heftier increase in expenditure, which widened the deficit by €11 million. In October, the deficit stood at €339 million, up from €328 million in the same period last year. The government is targeting a deficit of €297 million by year's end. Drops of €7 million in VAT receipts and €11 million in licences and fines were recouped by significant increases in the tax-take from Customs and excise, social security contributions and income tax. Figures released by the National Statistics Office show that Customs and excise taxes raked in an additional €51 million, income tax an extra €50 million and national insurance contributions an additional €19 million. Expenditure was particularly jacked up by an increase of €34 million in social security benefits, the energy support measures that amounted to €13.5 million and an increase in wages to the tune of €27 million. Expenditure declines were registered in the one-off shipyards voluntary retirement schemes (€18 million) and medicines and surgical materials (€10 million). Capital expenditure went up by €54 million, driven by a higher investment in infrastructure. In October, government debt stood at just over €4 billion, an increase of €291 million over the same period last year.
- **04 December 2010** While speaking at the launch of the healthcare branch of international communications company Saatchi and Saatchi in Malta, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that the value of pharmaceutical exports topped €176 million in the first nine months, a 12% increase

on the previous year. The Minister said the life sciences sector, which included pharmaceutical companies, was an important pillar of the economy through its contribution to GDP and the employment of a large number of people. Last year, the pharmaceutical industry generated €96 million of gross value added to the economy with a capital investment that exceeded €250 million, he said.

- **05 December 2010** Thousands of people took part in the second edition of the President's Charity Fun Run in aid of I-Istrina. More than 7,000 registered and paid a contribution of €10 each. Last year's participation had under 6,000 participants. H.E. the President, George Abela led a sea of joggers from San Anton to the Palace in Valletta. An equally large charity walk was held simultaneously from Casa Leone in Sta Venera to Valletta. President Abela was flanked by the Hon. Joseph Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care and Labour deputy leader Anglu Farrugia. Mrs Abela led the charity walk from Casa Leone. The walkers packed St Joseph High Road for the start and walked behind Mrs Abela, the Hon. Prime Minister and Mrs Gonzi and Opposition leader Joseph Muscat and Mrs Muscat.
- **07 December 2010** 445 applications were submitted under the Car Scrappage Scheme within two weeks of its opening, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said. The scheme, announced in the Budget, provides for applicants to scrap cars which are over 10 years old and then they would be eligible for assistance of up to €2,000 on the purchase price of a new, low emission vehicle.
- **07 December 2010** The percentage of smokers among 15-year-old girls in Malta is the third highest in Europe, a report issued shows. The study, from the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), examined the health of people in 31 countries, including the 27 European Union member states. The report – Health at a glance – shows that just over 20% of Maltese aged over 15 smoke at least a cigarette per day. The average in the EU is 24.2% with Greece topping the list at 39.9%. In Malta, 26% of men and 16% of women were found to be smokers.
- **08 December 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, said that between 2000 and the end of October this year, the government paid out €105,287,276 in compensation for expropriated land. The biggest amount was in 2005, when payments of €14,719,788 were made. In 2000 the government paid €12,315,078; 2001, €9,207,934; 2002, €5,255,756; 2003, €5,371,085 and 2004 €12,051,722. In 2006 the outlay was €6,398,260; 2007, €11,935,402; 2008, €5,841,521; 2009, €10,677,128 and 2010 (up to the end of October) €11,513,602.
- **08 December 2010** Malta has one of the most obese populations in the EU, according to a report issued by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Nearly one in every four adults (22.3%) was considered to be obese in 2008, much higher than the 15.5% EU average. The only other EU populations faring worse than Malta are the British (24.5%) and the Irish (23%) with whom the Maltese share their diet as a former colony of the UK. The least obese people are found to be in Romania (only 7.9%) and neighbouring Italy (9.9%). The situation among children is even worse, according to the report, as Malta's children aged 11 to 15 years are the most obese among their European counterparts. While 29.5% of Maltese children are considered to be either obese or overweight, the average in the EU stands at just 13.3%. The report, Health at a Glance – Europe 2010, compares a raft of health data among the 27 EU member states and on the whole Malta seems to have quite a healthy balance.

- **08 December 2010** Malta has registered the highest growth rate in female employment within the EU over the past four years, according to new data published in Brussels. Though still with the highest percentage of stay-home females in the EU, the rate of female participation in the workforce has increased steadily by an average of 1% every year between 2005 and 2009.
- **09 December 2010** The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose by 3.6% in real terms in the third quarter of this year, the National Statistics Office said. It said that GDP in the third quarter amounted to €1,638.6 million, an increase of 7.3% compared to the corresponding period last year. In real terms, GDP went up by 3.65.
- **09 December 2010** A record number of passengers for the month used the Malta International Airport in November, with 202,718 recorded passenger movements, a 12.5% increase over the same period last year. There was also an 11.8% increase in seat capacity over November 2009. The Malta International Airport said there were 11.7% more aircraft movements last month compared to last year.
- **09 December 2010** In reply to a parliamentary question, the Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, said that as at December 2, 2010, the number of prisoners at the Corradino Correctional Facilities stood at 582. Of these, 277 would have completed their sentences within two years. There were also 194 who were still awaiting sentencing.
- **10 December 2010** The Hon. Joe Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, addressed a joint press conference between the Ministry for Health and MUMN regarding the outcome of discussions held recently between the two parties. The government and the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses have resolved outstanding issues and agreement was reached after months of talks, the Minister said. The issues centred mostly on a shortage of nursing staff and overcrowding, particularly in the emergency ward at Mater Dei.
- **10 December 2010** The Hon Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, officially inaugurated the Childcare Centre 'Il-Merill' in Pembroke.
- **11 December 2010** The Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at Mater Dei Hospital carried away the Castille Resources Excellence Award during the Malta People Awards 2010. The awards are held by the Foundation for Human Resources Development.
- **11 December 2010** The economy continued to grow even if it slowed down to 3.6% in September, according to provisional estimates published by the National Statistics Office. In the previous two quarters growth surpassed the 4% mark. This is the fourth successive quarter of growth. During the three-month period between July and September growth in value added was primarily generated by hotels and restaurants, the financial services sector, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, real estate, online gaming, education and health. Value added in public administration, construction, agriculture and retail trade retained last year's levels. While household consumption expenditure edged downwards, increases were registered in industry stock levels, exports and imports.
- **12 December 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, inaugurated George Bonello du Puis Garden in Qui Si-Sana. The garden was rebuilt by workers from the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs. It is in the shape of a cradle, to afford some shelter from the wind. The garden features outdoor gym equipment, a playground and a recreation area, with three water features and large reservoirs underneath.

- 13 December 2010** The EU's statistical arm said that 59,000 Maltese were at risk of poverty, 14.6% of the population, according to 2008 figures. In a survey on income and living conditions in Europe, Eurostat said that 81 million people in the 27 EU member states were at risk of poverty, 17% of the population. 'At risk of poverty' is defined as meaning those living in a household with a disposable income that is below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median disposable income. Eurostat said that in Malta, 16,000 were 'severely materially deprived'. Such people could not pay rent/mortgage or utility bills, keep their home adequately warm or face unexpected expenses. They also could not afford to eat meat, fish or protein equivalent every second day and cannot afford a car, washing machine, colour TV or telephone.
- 13 December 2010** Cruise passenger arrivals last month dipped when compared to November 2009, but arrivals in the first 11 months of this year were still higher than the whole of last year, cruise terminal operator Viset said. It said arrivals dropped last month because of the cancellation of three port calls. Total passenger movements since January up to the end of November reached 466,684, compared to 419,200 during the same period in 2009, an 11.33% over January – November 2009. Total cruise passenger movements for the full year 2009 stood at 439,285. The total number of passenger movements last month was 48,578 compared to 52,133 during the same period last year.
- 13 December 2010** Malta celebrated Republic Day. Official celebrations started with an Armed Forces of Malta march along Republic Street to St George's Square in Valletta, where a parade was held. Following the parade, an investiture and medal-giving ceremony took place at the Palace.
- 14 December 2010** Nexans has been contracted by the government to lay the submarine electrical interconnector linking Malta to the European power grid in Sicily. The contract, worth €182m, was signed in the presence of the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment.
- 14 December 2010** Trips from Malta in October increased by 6,070 to 23,387, compared to the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that while trips to EU destinations stood at 19,899, those to non-EU countries were estimated at 3,488. Trips to EU and non-EU destinations advanced by 34% and 38%, respectively, with Italy registering the largest increase. Positive shifts were also noted in the British and French markets. A total 66% more men than women travelled from Malta with nearly half being in the 25-44 age bracket. Same-day visitors for October were calculated at 2,286, 23% less than 2009. Outbound passengers between January and October amounted to 239,010, up by 9% over last year. The estimated number of outbound trips to EU countries was 203,690 (85% of the total). The most visited countries were Italy and the UK. Trips to non-EU destinations increased by 8%.
- 15 December 2010** Malta's Gross Domestic Product was 79% of the GDP average last year, from 77% in the two previous years, figures issued show.
- 15 December 2010** Separate collection of waste fractions gained momentum last year with the bulk of such waste collected from civic amenity sites, the National Statistics Office said. It said in a statement on the management of solid waste that the waste collected from these sites last year registered an increase of 30.6% when compared to the previous year. On the other hand, the collection of separated waste from bring-in sites decreased by 13.2%. However, the increase in waste amounts collected through the grey bag scheme in 2009 amounted to 2,513 tonnes. The National Statistics Office said that waste disposed in public landfills last year dropped by 6.1% when compared to the previous year. From 2004 to 2009, the

different waste streams which were generated in Malta necessitated treatment through various disposal and recovery operations. Disposal operations for non-hazardous mineral waste, mainly generated by construction and demolition activities, treated an annual average of 81.8% of the total waste managed in approved facilities during the period under review.

- **15 December 2010** The government has handed the management of the Msida and Ta' Xbiex yacht marinas to Creek Development plc. The company was formed by 417 boat owners who are currently using the marinas, which together have about 700 berths.
- **15 December 2010** Malta's Gross Domestic Product was 79% of the GDP average last year, from 77% in the two previous years, Eurostat figures showed.
- **16 December 2010** A European Commission benchmarking report has placed Malta as the leader in e-government services in Europe. The 9th e-Government Benchmarking Report, which measured public sector performance in the deployment of e-Government in 32 countries (the 27 European Union member states together with Croatia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey) found Malta to be the best performing country by achieving 100% in five of the six core indicators measured. The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, said that such a result reflected Malta's vision and strategy in e-Government.
- **16 December 2010** A memo of understanding on the introduction of electrical vehicles was signed with Portugal. During a bilateral meeting with the Portuguese Secretary of State for Energy and Innovation Carlos Zorrinho, the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, discussed the importance of generating more energy from clean sources.
- **16 December 2010** Internet use has seeped into the lives of the Maltese with almost half the population using it every day, according to a Eurostat survey. The survey showed that 62% of respondents said they used the internet regularly, 60%, use it at least on a weekly basis, and 70% of households now have an internet connection. Young people are by far the most frequent users of the net. Apart from using the technology to send e-mails, 79% of those aged 16 to 24 years said they regularly used the internet to communicate through social networks and blogs.
- **17 December 2010** Nearly 1.2 million tourists visited Malta in the first 10 months of this year, spending more than a billion euro, the government said. It said in a statement, the 1,199,745 visitors spent more than 10 million nights here and €1,034,000,000. This was a record for the period, both in number and expenditure and the results were obtained due to the wise decisions which were taken, including the increase in flight to and from new destinations and investment in the local tourism product.
- **17 December 2010** The number of Maltese people "constantly struggling to keep up with bills" rose by 6% over the past 12 months, according to a new Eurobarometer survey released in Brussels. According to the EU-wide survey, conducted in Malta last September by Misco, 31% of the 500 Maltese respondents said they were struggling "all the time" to make ends meet by the end of every month. An identical survey in September 2009 gave the figure at 25%.
- **17 December 2010** The Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, refused to sign a letter initiated by British Prime Minister David Cameron requesting a freeze on the EU budget over the next seven-year period starting from 2014. The Prime Minister said that, although Mr Cameron asked Malta to support a freeze, he turned down the

request because the island did not believe this was the opportune time for such an initiative.

- **18 December 2010** The importance of values was stressed by H.E. the President, George Abela, as he launched this year's edition of *Milied Flimkien* at the Palace Courtyard in Valletta.
- **19 December 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela inaugurated an 18th Century Neapolitan Crib mounted by Fr Edgar Vella. This presepu was opened by the President at San Anton Palace.
- **19 December 2010** The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon have signed a memorandum of understanding for diplomatic consultations that establishes dialogue and diplomatic cooperation between the two countries. The memo of understanding reflects the strengthening of the relations between the two states in the past year.
- **20 December 2010** The Hon. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, inaugurated the new offices of the 'Istitut Gurnalisti Maltin'.
- **21 December 2010** Companies that employ disabled people would be able to benefit from tax deductions on any works carried out to improve accessibility at work, the National Commission Persons with Disability said. Employers will be eligible to the tax deductions for installing or modifying physical structures to improve accessibility, buying equipment for disabled people and for costs incurred in the training of disabled employees to help them in their job.
- **21 December 2010** The risk of poverty continued edging upwards last year with official figures showing that more than 61,000 people in Malta were living below the acceptable threshold. The figures were released by the National Statistics Office, just a week after the EU's statistical agency Eurostat released similar figures pertaining to 2008, which also showed an increase in poverty when compared to the previous year. Just over 15% of people living in private households were at risk of poverty in 2009, an increase of half a percentage point over the previous year. The threshold for calculating the number of people who are at risk of poverty stood at €5,961 last year and 61,278 people had an income below this threshold. Of these, 11,891 had an income less than 40% of the threshold. According to the National Statistics Office, people under 18 and those over 65 (21% and 19% respectively) were at greater risk of poverty. However, despite the higher risk faced by the elderly, those over 65 at risk of poverty dropped by 2.5%. The figures also showed people living in households with dependent children tended to face a higher risk of poverty than people in households without children.
- **21 December 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela kicked off *Gowl għall-Istrina* at the Hibernians Stadium, in Paola. The football event was held to raise money for the Community Chest Fund's annual L-Istrina charity campaign.
- **22 December 2010** Hotels welcomed 122,174 guests in October, up by 13.1% over the same month in 2009, the National Statistics Office said. Total guest nights increased by 10.2%, while the average length of stay was calculated at 5.9 nights. The overall net occupancy rate was 59.8%, a rise of 4.5% over 2009. Significant increases in occupancy rates were noted in all hotel categories. The non-resident occupancy rate stood at 57.5%, an increase of 4.4% in respect of last year's levels. The overall net

supply of bed-places stood at 38,696. Decreases in bed-places for Gozo and Comino were contrasted by increases in Malta. The net number of bedrooms for October went up by 231 and was calculated at 17,922.

- **22 December 2010** Malta's High Commission in London this year assisted 725 Maltese patients in the United Kingdom, the government said. The patients went to the United Kingdom for medical reasons. There were 74 patients last month while the average in the other months was 60. The Hon. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, praised the commission's work with these people, pointing out these were very sensitive cases because they involved sick people and their families. The ministry has an employee to carry out this work at the commission who will remain committed to continue improving the service.
- **23 December 2010** Former European Commissioner Joe Borg has been appointed chairman of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, succeeding the late President Guido de Marco. The former Commissioner was nominated by the government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his nomination was endorsed by the University, the Swiss Foreign Ministry and the German government, which have representatives on the board. The academy has been established for the past 20 years and provides courses in diplomacy to Maltese and foreign students. On accepting the nomination, Dr Borg asked for the allowance payable to him as chairman to be allocated for scholarships.
- **23 December 2010** This was a record year for the Foreign Ministry with more than 1,500 contacts of a commercial nature being made by embassies and Maltese consulates abroad. In a statement, the ministry said that 111 bilateral agreements came into effect or were ratified during this legislature, 30 related to foreign direct investment, 20 were on double taxation, 6 related to visas and 4 were on the promotion and protection of investment.
- **23 December 2010** The retail price index went up to 102.70 last month from 102.39 in October, the National Statistics Office said. It said this primarily reflected an increase of 3.83% in the clothing and footwear index, due to seasonally higher prices of garments.
- **23 December 2010** About 600 Maria Regina College students called on Dr Gonzi at his office in Castille, Valletta, where they presented him with 13 drawings. In return, he presented them with the finalised set of four cards. Marija Regina College, St. Paul's Bay primary school students were this year chosen to design the Christmas cards Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi is sending out, including to heads of state.
- **24 December 2010** While delivering the Christmas message, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Lawrence Gonzi, said that everyone had to work to improve the country to ensure a fair and kind society. He said that everyone had to understand that in a competitive world, Malta had to offer the best and this had to be better than that of others. This was the only way it could continue to attract the investment it needed to create employment, as had been done this year. The Prime Minister also paid tribute to the voluntary sector and thanked those working in the education sector, who, he said, helped in the full development of children.
- **24 December 2010** H.E. the President, George Abela, encouraged the people to treasure and strengthen the values which would help the people become a stronger nation. In his message for Christmas, the President said these values, which were common to everyone without social, political or religious distinction, were those of the family, work ethics, responsibility, honesty, integrity, solidarity, altruism, courage, good use of resources and love for the country and the common good.

- 24 December 2010** The number of full time employees increased by 227 in June when compared to the same month last year. The National Statistics Office said that during the period the number of people registering as unemployed dropped by 498. In June, the number of full-time employed persons stood at 145,690 whereas the number of registered unemployed amounted to 6,775. Over the preceding month, the number of persons employed on a full-time basis increased by 819, while the registered unemployed dropped by 277. In the 12 months to June, the full-time employed population increased by 227, while the registered unemployed fell by 498. The number of people employed on a full-time basis in the private sector went up by 756 when compared to the previous month. Total part-time employment in the same month increased by 984 over the preceding month. The number of part-timers also holding a full-time job increased by 110, while part-timers whose job was their primary occupation went up by 874.
- 26 December 2010** The 11th edition of I-Istrina, Malta's annual charity event which was held at the Lufthansa Technik hangar in Luqa, raised €2.3 million for charity.
- 28 December 2010** Provisional estimates for 2009 indicate that Gozo's contribution to national Gross Domestic Product at market prices is 5.7%, or €331.7 million, the National Statistics Office said. It said that GDP at a regional level increased last year, when compared to 2008. However, Gross Value Added for mainland Malta edged down by 0.2% in 2009, while that for Gozo went up by 2.1%, when compared to the previous year.
- 29 December 2010** An agreement has been drawn up between the Malta Standards Authority and the Local Government Department for regular inspections to start being held to ensure the safety of playgrounds. In a statement, the government said that after making the required inspections, the Malta Standards Authority inspectors would be expected to draw up individual reports on all playing fields for councils to know the state of the equipment and the place.
- 29 December 2010** Complaints by European consumers against Maltese businesses rose by more than 200% in the first nine months of this year over the same period last year, mostly related to internet purchases. However, according to figures released by the Malta branch of the European Consumer Centre, it is not only Maltese businesses that are slacking, complaints against European businesses in general also increased by 115%.
- 29 December 2010** Waste dumped in public landfills decreased by 6.1% in 2009 when compared to the previous year, according to official statistics. The amount of waste disposed of in non-hazardous public landfills fluctuated between 2004 and 2009, increasing in 2007 and 2008 but declining last year, the National Statistics Office said. The increase in waste dumped in landfills amounted to 21% in 2007 and 7.4% in 2008 due to the reduced capacity brought about by the refurbishment of the Sant'Antnin waste treatment plant in Marsascala. Between 2004 and 2006, the recycling plant was functional and the amount of treated waste was on the increase. There was a huge decrease of 61.4% in 2007, when parts of Sant'Antnin was closed for upgrading.
- 30 December 2010** Malta outperformed competing tourism destinations this year, recording a 12.5% increase in arrivals over the year, compared to Morocco, which was the closest, with an increase of 11.8%. Spain saw a growth rate of 1.3%, Portugal 6.3%, Cyprus 1.8%, Turkey 6.3% and Croatia 4.8% while arrivals in Tunisia dropped by 0.9%. Arrivals by the end of the year are expected to reach 1.33 million, surpassing the record of 1.29 million set two years ago. 1.12 million tourists came to Malta last year. During a press conference, the Hon. Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary

for Tourism in the Office of the Prime Minister, praised the results and the operators for their work.

- **31 December 2010** The shortfall between the government's recurrent revenue and total expenditure in the first 11 months of this year amounted to €307.9 million, a decrease of €102.6 million compared to the corresponding period last year. The National Statistics Office said that recurrent revenue registered an increase of €235.8 million, which more than offset the rise in total expenditure of €133.2 million, in the January-November period. During the period under review, recurrent revenue stood at €2,145.6 million. The comparative increase of 12.3 per cent was mainly triggered by higher returns from Value Added Tax (+€63.5 million), Income Tax (+€59.8 million) and Customs and Excise Duties (+€58.1 million). Other revenue components also registered improvements.

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