

WE REACHED THE 500TH READER OF OUR CONSULAR NEWSLETTER. OUR SUBSCRIBERS COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD – MALTA, UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA, USA, CANADA AND EUROPE.

THIRD MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MALTESE LIVING ABROAD

Photo Right: Hon George Vella with the council delegates at the ministry

The Council of Maltese Living Abroad held its third meeting in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malta on 3 - 4 October, 2013.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon. George W. Vella MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and were present the ten representatives from among the Maltese communities established in Australia, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and in member States of the European Union, as well as four Government-appointed experts who come from Malta, Gozo, the United Kingdom and Canada.

The Council discussed a variety of issues on its agenda such as the Malta Culture Institute, Maltese language teaching overseas, the teaching of the history of the Diaspora in Maltese schools, biometric passport services, banking services, and other matters that impact directly or indirectly Maltese communities in other countries.

In his opening speech, the Hon. Minister recognised the important role that each member of the Council had in bringing to the fore the issues that concern Maltese communities established in other countries, reiterating his Ministry's commitment to ensure regular consultation, to facilitate the work of the Council, to identify the potential of Maltese living abroad, and to ensure strong bilateral relations with the countries where Maltese communities have been long settled.

The Third Meeting of the Council of Maltese Living Abroad In line with the Guiding Principles issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs last July, the Hon. Ministers reiterated the Government's commitment to strengthen its relations with the Maltese Diaspora, to maintain the momentum on the progress achieved thus far in this regard, and most importantly to carve novel niches by which the Maltese communities in other countries can assist in shedding the spotlight on Malta by identifying foreign direct investment, tapping new tourism markets and promoting Malta as an ideal destination for international conferences and incentives.



Directorate for Maltese Living Abroad

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The Mission Statement of the Directorate

The Directorate of the Maltese Living Abroad (DMLA) is the central source of information, provides advice, support and co-ordinates all aspects related to Maltese citizens living abroad for the Government of Malta and its overseas representation. The DMLA strives to protect the rights and interests of our citizens around the globe, their registered non-government organisations, the constant monitoring of local, European and Diaspora countries' legislation affecting them and the implementation of Chapter 515 – Council for the Maltese Living Abroad (CMLA) Act.

The source of information concerning Maltese living abroad

The DMLA provides consultation, support and advice to the Maltese Government about the Maltese living abroad. This is to maintain a close and effective liaison with Malta's overseas diplomatic missions and the CMLA on matters related to the operations of the Directorate.

Implementation of the CMLA Act 2011

- The DMLA ensures the follow-up and implementation of decisions made by a convened of the CMLA. It assists the Secretary of the CMLA, who is autonomous but in the same time cooperates, in the organisation of the convening in Malta or teleconferencing of the CMLA and decisions taken by the same body.
- Maintain a register of NGOs and Associations of the Maltese Living Abroad.
- Maintain a register of Maltese living abroad who are successful in an array of areas.
- Promote and encourage the voluntary registration of Maltese citizens living abroad and for the reporting of births, change of names (by marriage) and deaths of Maltese living abroad.
- In conjunction with the Office of the Attorney-General, monitor all newly introduced and gradually review legislation to ensure that the rights and obligations of Maltese living abroad are safeguarded.
- Facilitate, assist and attend major and relevant Maltese cultural and traditional meetings and events organized by Maltese organizations in Diaspora countries.



Archbishop to wed migrant couples

Two Ethiopian migrant couples are to be married on Sunday in a ceremony officiated by the Archbishop. The couples received marriage preparation with assistance by the Emigrants' Commission and will be married at the Capuchin Church in Floriana on Sunday morning. The couples were given humanitarian protection after arriving here on small boats.

WHEN A MALTESE CITIZEN IS A “REAL” MALTESE CITIZEN?

Residents and citizens

Maltese citizens living abroad who have visited Malta over the holidays, might have had a shock when they found out that being a Maltese citizen does not guarantee some of the rights enjoyed by residents. The distinction between citizenship and residency is often rather confusing.

Why are the ID card privileges not extended to all people around the world who hold Maltese passports?

Citizenship gives us legal status as Maltese. There should be no distinction between those living in Malta and those living overseas in this respect. But those living in Malta enjoy certain privileges not afforded to those not resident here. The identity card is a case in point.

The Identity Card Act 1976 requires that an applicant for an ID card must have “resided in Malta for not less than six months”.

It is not clear whether one has to reside uninterruptedly for this length of time, or whether one can accumulate these six months over a period of time, and if so, over what period.

So what are the benefits and privileges resulting from possessing an ID card over those of being a Maltese citizen?

One of the most common complaints made by visiting non-resident Maltese relates to local transport. Unless you show your ID card to the driver on the new bus system in Malta, you are charged the tourist rather than the residents’ rate.

There is also the case of travel on the Gozo ferry where rates are considerably cheaper for those carrying an ID card showing they have a Gozo residence.

Another example is the kartanzjan, a form of senior citizen’s card which is automatically granted to people holding a Maltese ID card upon reaching the age of 60. Currently there are around 100,000 people in this category who are entitled to certain benefits. There are other examples.

Such ‘discrimination’ would appear to be all the more galling when one sees foreign residents in Malta being issued with an ID card and enjoying benefits that are denied to Maltese citizens living overseas. It certainly underlines the fact that possessing an ID card is quite distinct from being a Maltese citizen carrying a Maltese passport.

One could argue that this is a clear case of discrimination against a class of EU citizens (which all Maltese citizens are, regardless of where they reside) that should be tackled at EU level. In this respect, in particular, one is surprised to learn that Malta does not allow foreigners living in Malta (whether they hold a Maltese ID card or not) to vote for Maltese candidates in EU elections, even though several other EU states allow this.

Maltese living abroad visiting Malta are often puzzled about the fact that their Maltese citizenship does not automatically translate to their being issued with an ID card.

Why cannot an ID card be issued in conjunction with every passport application?

Why are the ID card privileges (with the exception of voting at local and EU parliamentary elections in Malta) not extended to all people around the world who hold Maltese passports?

Whenever the ID card issue has been raised, such as during last year’s Convention of Maltese Living Abroad, the general feeling has been that one is opening a can of worms and the issue should be left alone. It is doubtful that any government would be willing to embrace the proposition that the ID card privileges (even if with the exception of voting rights) should be extended to all Maltese citizens, regardless of residence, bearing in mind the apparent magnitude of applications that would result.

No convincing reasons have been provided to justify the discrimination referred to.

The main argument against issuing the ID card to non-resident Maltese has been that it entitles its holder to vote at elections. However, this does not appear to be correct as resident foreigners have been issued with ID cards without being granted the right to vote at Maltese and EU parliamentary elections.

By way of compromise, instead of extending the full set of privileges to non-resident Maltese citizens, it would be proper for the government to acknowledge the issue and address it by considering introducing some sort of identification, short of a full ID card, which non-resident Maltese citizens visiting Malta, particularly senior citizens and students, can benefit from having.

This could take the form of a ‘temporary ID card’ which allows senior citizens and students to travel on public transport at the same transport fares as local residents, and maybe enter cultural and historical sites in Malta at concession rates.

Such a solution would go a long way towards recognising the privileged status of holding Maltese citizenship regardless of residence, and would be most appreciated by visiting Maltese senior citizens and young students living abroad who visit our beloved Malta.

Maltese expat residents in endless struggle to get ID e-cards

Citizenship

Expat residents on the popular island of Malta are being left in the dark as to the process necessary to apply for a new ID e-residence card.

The Maltese government's Department for Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs is replacing ID cards issued to non-Maltese nationals with e-residence cards under a scheme announced in January, with applications made in person via an email request. A number of expat applicants who sent emails as long ago as five months have still not received their appointments.

Local media is being bombarded with complainants describing the situation as shambolic, disgraceful and chaotic, with many unable even to get through to the department by phone. Recently-sent emails are bouncing back, and lines to the department are either permanently engaged or, when calls are picked up, no-one answers.

Expat residents who decided to visit the department's offices in Valetta described the experience as one of panic and chaos, with many hours' wait to even agree an appointment. The reception desk was not manned, and staff seemed to have no idea what was going on.

Expats were moved between rooms, and the earliest appointments given were in July. Many are concerned as their current ID cards have already expired, although staff at the department have insisted they are valid as ID documents until the end of June.

Questions as to which documents to carry after 30 June have remained unanswered, and a representative from the EU Citizens against Discrimination group is claiming that the new e-cards are illegal in any case. Expats trying to make sense of the mess have also noted that those living on the Maltese island of Gozo rather than Malta itself are having to undertake long journeys just to get an appointment at a later date - See more at: <http://www.expatsblog.com/news/2006135670/expat-residents-on-malta-struggle-to-get-new-id-cards#sthash.IWdNDzp7.dpuf>

How to get an ID card in Malta - Updated

There is one pretty good reason to go to the trouble of getting an I.D. card if you plan to stay here for any length of time, and that is to save on your transport costs. At time of writing, an all-day bus ticket costs €2.60 for anyone without said card, and €1.50 for those who do. There are doubtless other advantages which I haven't figured out just yet, but as getting the card is free it's good enough to start with.

So this is how you go about getting your resident's card like my one here (as you can see, it's no good for travelling outside the country..).

So this is how you go about getting your resident's card like my one here (as you can see, it's no good for travelling outside the country..).

First of all, you need to take yourself and your passport down to the electoral commission offices at Evans Building, St Elmo Place in Valetta. When you go inside, a brusque official standing at the door will ask you what you're looking for. Mumble something about an i.d. card and he directs you to where you need to fill in an application form. Then you stand around for a little while as people finish their cigarette breaks until you see a police official who checks your passport. Then you queue again in order to get your photo taken.

One more queue and you're informed that a letter will be sent out to you, and once you receive this you can come back to collect your card. So you need to have an address in Malta, (a hotel is not going to do it),

although there is no need to prove that you actually live at this address. By the way, you are supposed to have been living - or plan to live - for at least a year in Malta, although again they don't check this.

My letter arrived within the week so I toddled back the next Saturday for more queuing and more photos and I came away with the card clutched in my grubby little hand.

All free of charge, which cannot be said for most things around here. That's it.

Additional Reasons to get an I.D. Card:

1. - The Maltese ID card also entitles you to free treatment at any of the public hospitals. This is possible even more important than cheaper bus fares!
2. - With this ID card you can join a Maltese public library, all free of charge.
3. - Another update, this I.D. card is actually VERY useful. If you have one of these it becomes a lot easier to open a bank account in Malta. I didn't at the time I opened my account, and the process was rather tortuous.
4. - Makes it easy to join a video/dvd rental shop

Check out this website for more details: www.electoral.gov.mt

THE ELDEST S.A.C.E. STUDENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN 2013

Maltese Language School of Adelaide



Lora Baldacchino giving an oral presentation during a Maltese lesson at the school

Lora Baldacchino nee Mifsud is the eldest student sitting for the Maltese Year 12 examination in South Australia in 2013. She attended the Maltese Language School of Adelaide during the year to undertake the Maltese Continuers course of the South Australian Certificate of Education Board of SA.

She was born in Floriana, Malta in 1935 the first of seven children. Her parents moved to Zejtun when she was still a baby, where she grew up and later attended the Zejtun Primary School.

Lora wanted to become a school teacher but, in keeping with the common way of thinking at that time, it was not considered worthwhile educating daughters beyond primary school. This being the case, sadly, Lora did not have the opportunity to attend secondary school but this never dampened her enthusiasm for academic achievement.

At the age of fifteen Lora migrated to Adelaide, South Australia, with her family. In 1952 Lora married Karmenu Baldacchino, her childhood sweetheart also from Zejtun, who had left his parents and siblings behind to follow Lora to Australia. They had five children over the next 13 years, Lora working when she could to help with family finances.

Lora and Karmenu now have fifteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren and Lora keeps herself busy with her hobbies: looking after her grandchildren, Avon customers and voluntary work with the Chaplaincy and Maltese Guild among other things.

Her latest challenge was studying Year 12 Maltese in 2013 and sitting secondary school exams for the first time in her life. Lora has repeatedly said how interesting the course at the Maltese Language School was, how much she enjoyed it, how fascinating she found the history of Malta, its culture and language.

The research and assignments she did on the language, the Megalithic Temples, the city of Valletta and Malta in the Second World War really opened up the world of her homeland far more than she could have ever thought possible! Lora is so glad she did the Year 12 SACE Maltese CONTINUERS course!

Frank Scicluna

Principal of the Maltese Language School of Adelaide



Ambassador for 'Welcome to Australia'

Hon Jing Lee MLC

Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs

Ambassador for Welcome to Australia

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, Hon. Jing Lee MLC, is honoured to accept an invitation to become one of South Australia's Ambassadors for Welcome to Australia.

Pastor Brad Chilcott, Director of Welcome to Australia, personally asked Ms Lee to be the Ambassador for the not-for-profit national organisation, which assists in positively promoting

the image of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and multiculturalism amongst the South Australian community.

"As a migrant who has lived in Australia for more than 30 years, I strongly value the democratic beliefs of Australia," Ms Lee said. "I find it a great honour to work with so many inspiring and courageous people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. "Australia is a proud country of migrants. The contribution of migrants to Australia's society, culture and prosperity has transformed Australia as a great nation. "We are all different but we share a common goal in a brighter future in a growing multicultural community. "I look forward to working with the team at Welcome to Australia to promote South Australia's enriched multicultural community," Ms Lee said.

Hon Consul for Malta – Frank L Scicluna OAM JP

It was a pleasure meeting you at the Malta National Day Dinner Dance. Thank you for your wonderful service to the Maltese community in South Australia. Kindly keep me informed about activities and updates from the Consulate of Malta in SA. I have enjoyed our conversations on the night and look forward to meeting you in the near future. In the meantime, if I can assist you or your community in anyway, please feel free to contact me. Kind regards
Jing Lee

Best Coastal Cities in Malta





MALTA – VALLETTA 2018

COUNCIL OF MALTESE LIVING ABROAD

“Malta does not end in Gozo or Comino. Malta is wherever the Maltese are,” said one Australian of Maltese descent. How true. Valletta 2018 is a chance for us to share our year with you and help you to contribute it from wherever you are.

Thousands of citizens of direct Maltese descent live in Australia, with scores of thousands based in the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and other countries. With Malta’s accession to the EU, a significant number of Maltese citizens now live in European institution centres such as Brussels and Luxembourg.

If you recognise yourself in the groups above, then we’d like you to feel part of the islands’ prospective ECoC year 2018. We’re keen to make V.18 come to you; be as accessible as possible whether you join us in Malta or from your home abroad.

V.18 is about opportunities to do more

Many of you may be contributing already to Maltese cultural activities, whether officially or as a volunteer in a cultural organisation or informally within your family keeping your Maltese roots and traditions alive. V.18 aims to spur you to get involved in new ways to explore your Maltese identity.

The Council for Maltese Living Abroad was set up in late 2011 as an advisory body representing Maltese communities abroad. It seeks to bridge the divide that exists between the Maltese in Malta and the Maltese living abroad, seeing Malta not just a country but as a nation with a vast diaspora scattered around the world.

A first way to get involved now is to use the official bodies, such as the Council, and the Maltese Embassy or Consulate in your adoptive or home country. These provide an ideal platform for the promotion of Maltese culture abroad and reciprocally, of international cultural productions in Malta.

These bodies can help you connect with Maltese cultural entities already active in your area of interest or geographic region. Get in touch also with the coordinator of our V.18 advisory group on the Maltese Diaspora.

You might also like to see our proposed Themes for V.18 to think how they can help you to create or participate in V.18 projects within your cultural groups overseas or collaborate with groups in Malta.

To think about

There are a lot of ways to think through your Maltese identity and rekindle it – not just through official citizenship but, for example, by using innovative technologies to bridge divides. Imagine creating a virtual citizenship, producing a ‘passport’ for V.18 virtual world linking all citizens of the Maltese diaspora.

Here are just some prompts to help you think about how you can be involved:

- Can I renew my active citizenship through Maltese culture – using the Maltese language, Malta’s food icons, music or traditions?
- How can V.18 help me access aspects of life today in Malta? What information would I like on Malta, and the V.18 year itself?
- I won’t be in Malta for 2018, so what would I like to help make me part of the ECoC year in my country?
- Can I tell a story in a V.18 project about what it is to be Maltese or of Maltese descent living overseas? (ie. through an exhibition, a virtual link-up and so on)
- Have I seen or heard about an idea in my country that could be a good initiative to adapt for a V.18 project?

Main Text

EDUCATION MINISTER LAUNCHES BOOK ABOUT CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The European Parliament Information Office in Malta has published a short book for children entitled ‘Ħbieb tal-Qalb’. It was presented during an event at Maria Regina College, St Paul’s Bay Primary School, this morning, in the presence of Education Minister Evarist Bartolo, MEP Roberta Metsola and Children’s Commissioner Helen D’Amato.

‘Ħbieb tal-Qalb’, which is written in Maltese and Arabic, recounts the story of three children, Matthew Liz and Rashida, and illustrates the enriching aspects of cultural diversity. The book presentation formed part of the events being organised in the run-up to the discussion with MEPs on irregular migration, which will be held on Tuesday 29 October.

The St Paul’s Bay primary students who participated in the event spoke about various aspects of the European Union and the European Parliament, as well as their own experiences in a school with a great deal of cultural diversity. In fact the St Paul’s Bay Primary School is probably Malta’s most culturally diverse school, with students from 33 different countries.

MEP Roberta Metsola congratulated the students on their knowledge of the European Union, and explained that while the Maltese Parliament and the European Parliament are separate entities, any laws approved by the European Parliament apply to the 28 EU member states, including Malta. She explained that this meant that as an MEP, she represents the interests of every Maltese citizen through the work she carries out in the European Parliament. Education Minister Evarist Bartolo recalled how, as a child, he

only learnt about different cultures from books, and said his learning experience would have been much more enriching if he had classmates from different countries.

Students shared their own experiences with friends from different cultural backgrounds. They spoke about their exposure to a variety of languages, as well as different religions. One of the students, for instance, mentioned that he first heard about the Islamic practice of daily prayer from one of his classmates, while an English student speaking fluent Maltese said



that he had learnt some Bulgarian from his friend and that he, in turn, taught him some Maltese.

The discussion with MEPs on irregular migration will include the story of Goitom, who escaped from a life of forced labour in Eritrea in search of 'somewhere safe'. A debate on the local realities and perceptions with mayors and MEPs will follow, and MEPs from the European Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee will close the event, which will be held on Tuesday 29 October at Fortress Builders Interpretation Centre in Valletta at 7pm. For further information and registration please call the European Parliament Information Office in Valletta on 21235075 or send an email to epvalletta@europarl.europa.eu.





A PICTURE IS WORTH MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

Prickly pear extract may help patients



00011 Prickly pears may possess substances that could contribute to curing cancer and help diabetes patients, according to the results of a study published by the University of Malta and a local biotech company.

It focused on the benefits of Tex-OE, a patented natural plant extract made from the skin of *Opuntia ficus indica*, produced by the Institute for Cellular Pharmacology. This product is neither a medicine nor a vitamin supplement, but is sometimes referred to as a nutraceutical.

The institute, which collaborated with the University's Anatomy Department, said Tex-OE accelerates the body's response to stress by inducing the production and release of heat shock proteins, allowing healthy cells to better survive chemotherapy. Thanks to a €100,000 grant from the Malta Council for Science and Technology, three effects of the extract were investigated over three years.

Project coordinator Charles Saliba said that in the heat shock protein tests, the product did not seem to enable tumour cells to survive as well, so by administering it with drugs, such as Cisplatin and Vincristine, chemotherapy would mostly kill cancer cells. During a presentation at the MCST headquarters in Bighi, Mr Saliba said the study also focused on the effects of Tex-OE on diabetes, whose sufferers are more prone to infectious diseases. The extract reduced the risk of such complications.

The third area of the study was in stem cell transplants from bone marrow, cord blood and fat, which are used to treat conditions such as leukaemia, cancer and certain degenerative diseases. Tests carried out on cord blood using Tex-OE demonstrated that stem cell populations increased, which is important because the amount of stem cells in a unit is only sufficient to treat a person weighing up to 50 kilograms. This might prove to be a breakthrough in the future since stem cell treatments are still in their infancy.

Heritage Malta invites designs for monuments to former Presidents and Ex-Prime Minister Dom Mintoff



Heritage Malta has invited design proposals for monuments to Presidents Censu Tabone and Guido de Marco and Prime Minister Dom Mintoff. As has been the practice, the monuments to the late Presidents will be built in their home town while that to Mr Mintoff will be erected at the Auberge de Castille, which already has monuments to former Prime Ministers Boffa and Borg Olivier.

To date, monuments have been erected in Birkirkara for former President Anthony Mamo, Hamrun for President Anton Buttigieg, Zabbar for President Agatha Barbara and Rabat for Acting President Xuereb. More details can be found at

<http://www.heritagemalta.org/monuments/>



CLIMATE CHANGE – MALTA MUST ACT NOW

Following the report published on 27th of September by the panel of thousands of scientists of the United Nation's 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,' Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, said that it joins the European Greens in calling for a public investment programme and long term policies on clean and renewable energy sources.

Ralph Cassar, AD spokesperson for energy, industry and transport, said, "moving towards a fossil-fuel free and renewable energy economy will mean that Malta will invest in clean air for its citizens and reduce dependence on foreign sources of energy, leaving more money in the local economy. This will also mean the creation of new jobs in the clean energy sector."

"As we have insisted over the years, long term greenhouse reduction targets and policies should be adopted, to ensure long term investor certainty and promote job security and good job conditions in the sector. Government cannot remain issuing short term initiatives in this sector – something which is penalising both small companies and workers."

THE MELBOURNE CUP 2013



The **Melbourne Cup** is Australia's major thoroughbred horse race. Marketed as "the race that stops a nation", it is a 3,200 metre race for three-year-olds and over. It is the richest "two-mile" handicap in the world, and one of the richest turf races.



Conducted by the Victoria Racing Club on the Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne, Victoria, the event starts at 3pm (daylight saving time) on the first Tuesday in November.

The race was first held IN 1861 over two miles (about 3,218 metres), but was shortened to 3,200 metres (2.0 mi) in 1972 when Australia adopted the metric system. This reduced the distance by 18.688 metres (61.31 ft), and Rain Lover's 1968 race record of 3min.19.1sec was accordingly adjusted to 3min.17.9sec. The present record holder is the 1990 winner Kingston Rule with a time of 3min 16.3sec.

Bart Cummings kept his hopes of alive of starting his 88th runner in the Melbourne Cup when veteran galloper Precedence won his second Moonee Valley Cup on Saturday.

Cummings, who has won an incredible 12 Melbourne Cups, now trains in partnership with his grandson James and the pair turned eight-year-old Precedence out in great order for the Group Two Moonee Valley Cup over 2500m.

Precedence, who won the Moonee Valley Cup in 2010, was given a great ride by Craig Williams and picked up his rivals comfortably at the top of the straight to win by one and a half lengths from Shoreham with Gotta Take Care finishing third. But Precedence, who has ran in the past three Melbourne Cups, is expected to need at least a 1.5kg penalty from handicapper Greg Carpenter to make the field for the Flemington feature on the first Tuesday in November.

The gelding was only 44th in the order of Melbourne Cup entry before the Moonee Valley Cup and Carpenter will decide 00011on a penalty for the horse on Monday.

If he is to make the field James Cummings thinks Precedence can improve on the 9th, 11th and 10th placings he has finished in the past three years.

"He's fit and fresh on the scene and feeling good," James Cummings said.

"There's nothing to say he can't run better than he did in the last three years."

A 1.5kg penalty would give Precedence a Cup weight of 54kg and place it 32nd in the order of entry, still needing several contenders above him to withdraw their entries.

Meanwhile Sydney colt Savvy Nature has firmed in the betting for the Victoria Derby next Saturday following an impressive win in the Moonee Valley Vase (2040m).

Ridden by James McDonald, Savvy Nature came from last to circle the field around the home turn before going on to win by two and a half lengths from All Rigged Up and Pinstripe Lane.

Savvy Nature is now a \$4.50 equal favourite for the Derby with the Peter Snowden-trained Complacent who was an impressive winner of the Spring Champion Stakes earlier in the month.



Prime Minister's Christmas cards to be designed by autistic children

Michelle Muscat, the wife of Prime Minister, who is the honorary chairwoman of the Autism Parents Association visited St Nicholas Attard Primary School recently. She said that this year, Christmas cards sent by the Prime Minister would be designed by children with autism.

All autistic children can send their Christmas card designs to the association at PO Box 30 Marsa or to the Office of the Prime Minister at Castille.

The closing date is October 31 and all designs will be on show at the St James Cavalier during the month of November. Six designs will be picked for a special Christmas set.

Mrs Muscat was joined by the Education Minister Evarist Bartolo who said that following a successful scheme to open schools during the summer for autistic children the scheme will continue during the winter months.

School grounds at Dingli, Mgarr, Marsaxlokk, Attard and Sannat primaries will be open on Fridays from 5.30 to 8.30pm, on Saturdays from 2 to 5pm and on Sundays and public holidays from 10am to 5pm. The Fgura Primary will make its grounds available on Sunday.

Joseph Muscat's 'satisfactory' outcome raises serious doubts amongst Opposition, Greens



Matthew Vella

The Green Party has joined a chorus of disapproval on the postponement of 'concrete' action by the European Council, after the EU's heads of state pushed a decision on the steps to be taken on the Mediterranean migration issue to December.

"It is shameful," Alternattiva Demokratika deputy chairperson Carmel Cacopardo said. "This means that at the moment of truth the European Council was incapable of putting into practice the European values of respect towards life and human dignity.

"The EU has for years been postponing decisions on real and practical solidarity on the Mediterranean migration issue as an EU issue. Malta should publicly support the positions taken by the European Greens and recently reiterated by EU Parliament President Schultz on responsibility sharing and the reform of the Dublin II Convention as well as the creation of

legal migration channels into the EU."

Yesterday Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said the achievement was positive, but Opposition leader Simon Busuttil said the outcome of the Council conclusions were disappointing.

"At this moment of truth, the Greens in Malta support the Maltese government's insistence, as supported by the Greek and Italian governments, that immigration on the Mediterranean border of the Union is an EU issue like any other," Cacopardo said. "AD understands that it is necessary that the Maltese government uses strong language in its criticism of the EU position, yet it hopes that its decisions are such that the human dignity of the immigrants is respected at all times."

Yesterday PN leader Simon Busuttil said Muscat had emerged from the European Council without any concrete solutions after having repeatedly stated he would not emerge from the Council room if he was not satisfied with the outcome.

"He's simply playing for time. The new conclusions add nothing to what was already said in the past years or in preceding Council meetings. Actually, they are a step back because it does not even make a specific reference to Malta's actual situation, as happened in recent years. The Prime Minister did not manage to influence what was discussed in the Council," Busuttil said.

The PN leader said the conclusions do not even mention "relocation of migrants" towards other EU member states, "putting paid to Muscat's stamping of feet," Busuttil added.

"As Opposition leader he criticised the relocation of some 700 migrant from Malta to the EU because this was not a mandatory burden sharing system. Now he has not even managed to win the support for a voluntary burden sharing system. This shows it is only persuasion and reason that can convince other EU states to take concrete action."

Joseph Muscat is pushing for migration to be given its due attention on the Council agenda.

Addressing the Maltese media in Brussels late this evening, Muscat said there were a number of EU leaders who, like him, will not hold back from expressing their opposition if the Council conclusions were to be unsatisfactory.

"There is a resolve among a number of prime ministers not to mince our words if the conclusions fail to be satisfactory. We will be very clear in our position," Muscat said, admitting that Malta's fight was an uphill struggle.

He also insisted that Malta would not wait until the migration summit to be held in June to see the EU "turning its words into action".

"Fact is that the Lithuanian Presidency's conclusion on migration was unacceptable," Muscat said.

Describing the original conclusion as "one sentence of condolences", the proposed draft conclusion included a proposal for a returns policy, the implementation of return flights by Frontex, the sharing of responsibility - rather than burden sharing - and prevention measures.

This was the first time that prevention of irregular migration is being mentioned.

The proposed draft conclusion was prepared on Monday during the meetings which Muscat held with Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and continued during the meeting held between Samaras and the Italian Premier, Enrico Letta.

Spearheaded by Malta, Muscat was said to have entreated eight countries - which already include Italy, Greece, Spain and France - to support the proposed draft conclusion on migration.

FWA welcomes the temporary return of the De Valette Sword and Dagger to Malta



OFondazzjoni Wirt Artna welcomes Government's success in securing the temporary return to Malta from France of the De Valette sword and dagger. These two historic artefacts carry a deep and great significance in the collective memory of the Maltese nation.

They were presented to Grand Master Jean De Valette, the hero of the Great Siege of 1565, by King Philip II of Spain as a sign of gratitude for the Order's role in stemming the Ottoman domination of Europe.

Ever since their removal as prize of war from the island by the French in 1798, successive generations of Maltese have ceaselessly longed for their return. It is therefore with great satisfaction to note that after two centuries this long-standing wish is to become reality, even if for a definite period.



Three FONDAZZJONI WIRT ARTNA (FWA) heritage sites voted amongst Malta's top ten attractions

In the ratings compiled by the international travel website Trip Advisor.com, Fort Rinella has placed third after Mdina and St. John's Co-cathedral while the Saluting Battery has placed in tenth position. The Noon-day gun which is fired daily from the Saluting Battery has obtained many good ratings which however have been posted with reviews of the Upper Barracca Gardens which is in the eighth position. The Lascaris War Rooms has been voted the second best attraction in Valletta after St. John's Co-cathedral.

The ratings are based on reviews posted on the travel website by individual persons to rate the places they visit. Fort Rinella has been described as "The best living history venue we've ever visited"; "Incredible value for money"; "A truly living museum" and "Just Brilliant". The staff and volunteers at Fort Rinella are described as "astonishingly knowledgeable", "dedicated" and possessing "enthusiasm in bucket loads".

TripAdvisor.com is a world-wide travel website that assists customers in gathering travel information, posting reviews and opinions of travel-related content and engaging in interactive travel forums. This website is visited by millions of persons every day. Thus the good rankings obtained by FWA attractions on this highly influential travel website give FWA, its staff and volunteers great satisfaction. At present FWA manages Fort Rinella in Kalkara, the Malta at War Museum in Vittoriosa, the Lascaris War Rooms and the Saluting Battery in Valletta. Besides these sites it is also responsible for a number of

other cultural heritage sites which are spread all over the island. FWA currently employs 34 persons and every year attracts thousands of local and foreign tourists to its sites and attractions.

A third of Malta covered by artificial, built-up areas- Eurostat



In 2012, forests and other wooded land occupied around 40% of the total area of the EU, cropland a quarter and grassland a further fifth, while artificial areas¹, such as buildings, road and rail networks accounted for 5%. A third of Malta is covered with built-up and other artificial areas, Eurostat confirmed.

In Sweden (76% of total land area), Finland (72%), Estonia (61%), Slovenia (60%) and Latvia (56%) is covered by forests and other wooded areas. The highest shares of cropland were observed in Denmark (49%), Hungary (47%), Romania (36%), the Czech Republic and Poland (both 34%), Germany (33%), Bulgaria and Italy (both 32%) and France (31%).

Ireland (67%) has more than two thirds of the country covered by natural or agricultural grasslands, followed by the United Kingdom (40%), the Netherlands (38%), Luxembourg (37%) and Belgium (32%).

Finland (16%), Sweden (12%) and the Netherlands (11%) have the largest proportions of water areas, while Cyprus (21%), Greece (19%), Malta (15%), Spain and Portugal (both 12%) had the highest proportions of shrub land.

A third of Maltese land is covered with built-up and other artificial areas, followed by Belgium (13%), Luxembourg and the Netherlands (both 12%).

Il-Barumbara - A dovecote



Wild pigeons had been living in Malta thousands of years before the first inhabitants arrived on rafts or canoes from Sicily. These pigeons lived on cliff ledges and in holes in cliff walls, as well as in man-made buildings – a characteristic which led to them being domesticated.

Before the advent of guns, ways and means were found to catch wild birds for food because there wasn't much else available to the poor by way of protein, except for snails scavenged from fields. When guns arrived they were for the privileged few - unaffordable to those who could not even pay for a pair of shoes. So the poor people had to find ways to catch wild birds in quantity without the use of weapons. They came up with the idea of building a dovecote or **barumbara** as an integral part of

the house - except that it wasn't for doves but for pigeons.

Farmers used to build ledges and holes in the walls of their farmhouses to be taken up by the domestic pigeons, which were induced to stay around the farmhouse by being fed on grains and other seeds. These man-made ledges and holes in walls came to be known as '**Barumbara**' in Maltese. This is probably a corruption of the Sicilian word '**palummara**' or the Italian word '**columbara**' - a place where pigeons live and breed.

Each old Maltese farmhouse used to have a barumbara in one of its walls. There are also several areas and streets in Malta known as **Il-barumbara**, indicating that there must have been ancient dovecotes in the vicinity. The pigeons were encouraged to breed in the upper section of the house, where four or five rows of nesting places would be made in each of the walls. There might be up to 100 nesting places in one small room! Nowadays you might come across some old rural dwellings with just a few nesting places for pigeons incorporated in the facade as the one I found in Zabbar.

Customs and traditions in Malta

With its roots firmly in folklore and religion, the Maltese Islands celebrate a long history of dependence entwined with modernisation. Over the past half century, this little Mediterranean island, freshly self-determining after a long history of colonisation and dependence, achieved a great deal in the way of modernisation. Much of the progress was achieved at break-neck speed, including an advanced infrastructure, well-developed industries like financial services, IT, and others. While much of this may come as a surprise to first time visitors, this transformation has not eliminated the core elements of Malta's cultural identity – its customs and traditions.

Largely rooted in rural folklore and religion, Maltese customs are still clearly visible in everyday life, most notably, the village festa. This celebration of the local village's patron saint started over five centuries ago, during the reign of the Knights of St. John, and till today, brings with it a colourful cacophony of Mediterranean boisterousness. Possibly the most well known is the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, or Mnarja. This highlight of the cultural calendar is celebrated in the wooded area of Buskett, and features animal and agricultural displays, traditionally cooked rabbit, and għana – a traditional type of Maltese music. Traditional life starts early on in Malta. The vast majority of babies are still baptised into the Roman Catholic faith, and this celebration usually involves a not so intimate gathering with family, friends, and of course, food.



The Maltese Falcon

Shortly after, usually on a child's first birthday, the Maltese practise a little-known tradition called the *il-quċċija*, which involves the child crawling towards a collection of objects while family and friends encourage the child to pick something. The tradition dictates that the selected object is representative of the child's future career. Objects typically include rosary beads, indicating an ecclesiastical calling, a hardboiled egg, symbolising prosperity, as well as more modern inclusions such as a calculator symbolising a career in finance. Other religious sacraments are celebrated with the same gusto, including the First Holy Communion, which sees the child dressed in flamboyant, angel-like attire and is always followed by a party in the child's honour.

This celebration is closely followed the sacrament of Confirmation, which has a similar celebratory style. Weddings are a big affair in Malta. In fact, the Island has recently started including wedding tourism as part of its offering to visitors. However, the traditional Maltese wedding is still alive and kicking. Although there have been some modifications throughout the years, the core concepts are still practised: ceremonies are almost always held in a church while celebrations are held afterwards, usually in wedding halls or one of the Islands' many gardens.

The bride and groom distribute small trinkets or presents as a sign of thanks and as a small memento for their guests. Food is a major part of the celebrations, and in particular, sweets. Maltese weddings almost always feature *perlini* – a candy coated almond sweet of Sicilian origin.



A MALTESE ARTISAN = WATCHMAKER - L-INDURATUR

Honorary Consuls: the way forward

Hon Dr. George Vella Minister for Foreign Affairs

Every two years, the honorary consuls forming part of Malta's extensive network come together to touch base and receive guidance on the various aspects of their work.

Not to be confused with our ambassadors or consulates around the world, the honorary consuls are high net worth individuals who have been identified over the years in order to provide consular support to Maltese citizens. Their role provides a practical multiplier effect to small states such as ours in that it allows for a friendly interlocutor to be representing Malta in as many cities as necessary.

These individuals provide an invaluable service to Malta at no cost, hence, honorary. They have been crucial in many a difficult consular case and provided Maltese nationals with a friendly face when most in need.

We are indeed grateful to their service and have every intention of strengthening our relations with our network in order to explore additional avenues of cooperation.

This, in essence, is the reason why every two years the Ministry for Foreign Affairs hosts our honorary consuls in Malta, bringing them together in order to exchange views, share experiences and learn about the direction in which the country is being steered.

I welcome over 100 members of our honorary consuls' network. The timing at the beginning of a new Administration and new legislature is particularly opportune. The agenda will reflect the priorities of a new government and, in keeping with our way of doing business, will be centred on listening and receiving feedback from our contacts on the ground.

The theme for the meeting is Enhancing Malta's International And Economic Profile.

This reflects the very nature of the work of my ministry in ensuring that the diplomatic networks that we have at our disposal are actually encouraged to work towards Malta's standing on an international level while seeking to contribute to its economic success.

Honorary consuls provide an invaluable service to Malta at no cost

The setting of the meeting as well as the agenda reflects just this. Smart City Malta and the Valletta campus of the University of Malta have been chosen as locations for the meeting. This is no coincidence: it has been done with a specific aim in mind.

Smart City represents the progress Malta has achieved in the ICT sector, an area this government will build upon ensuring its further development. This will be the central theme of the first day of proceedings. Malta's economic direction: what is our vision for Malta and where are we headed? The ICT sector will be discussed alongside our maritime and aviation sectors as well as the financial sector.

The honorary consuls will be given the opportunity to work in groups and discuss the issues falling under each heading.

The aim is simple: the experience and acumen that these individuals can bring to the table is unique and important to our understanding of the international setting.

Day 2 will take us to the University campus in Valletta. The theme will be centred around education, culture and tourism – new markets, new export opportunities and niche areas for Malta.

Naturally, Valletta 18 will take centre stage on this day starting the process for our honorary consuls to come on board the V18 project. They will be asked to provide the all-important link to the world to export the V18 vision of Malta. This together with our educational system which is fast becoming an important export for Malta.

We all recognise that these are difficult times for the global economy. Now like never before, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' role is crucial to facilitate contacts and create the right opportunities for our honorary consuls to further their reach and work together in order to seek out new opportunities for Malta.

This is what I wish for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs: to create the necessary contacts and to make our networks available for our agencies and businesses in order to explore different avenues and opportunities.

cupcake is displayed on the steps of the Sydney Opera House as the World Heritage-listed building celebrates its 40th birthday on Sunday. The distinctive performance hall, inspired by Danish architect Jorn Utzon's childhood in the Aalborg shipyards, is one of Australia's best-known landmarks and is a centerpiece of Sydney's cultural scene.

Sydney Opera House celebrates 40 years



SYDNEY – The Sydney Opera House, World Heritage-listed as “one of the indisputable masterpieces of human creativity,” celebrated its 40th birthday Sunday with a flotilla of lifesavers, Aboriginal dancers and a gigantic cupcake.

- Huge crowds packed the steps for a distinctively Australian performance on the glittering harbor front, where three generations of Danish architect Jorn Utzon's family were the guests of honor.

- It was a postcard-perfect day beneath the same cloudless blue skies that inspired Utzon's winning design to build Sydney an opera house back in 1956 — the white sails drawn from his childhood

in the Aalborg shipyards.

- “A building like this happens once in a lifetime,” Utzon's son Jan told revelers on Sunday. “It is a unique Australian expression of will and enthusiasm and ‘let's-go-do-it’ kind of spirit.”

A crew of surf lifesavers wearing their famous yellow-and-red caps and costumes arrived at the Opera House's Man O' War steps on one of Sydney's distinctive ferries, flanked by six of the association's dinghies and two tugboats.

They were met and led by Aboriginal dancers up the red-carpeted steps, where a traditional smoking ceremony was held to spiritually cleanse the site, accompanied by an indigenous dance ritual and didgeridoo.

A giant cupcake topped with a model of the Opera House made from icing was carried onto the stage by the lifesavers, and Australian rocker Jimmy Barnes — frontman of Cold Chisel — led a rousing chorus of “Happy Birthday,” accompanied by a navy brass band and school choir.

An Airbus A340 made a low pass over the site to cap celebrations.

The distinctive performance hall is one of Australia's best-known landmarks and is a centerpiece of Sydney's cultural scene, hosting some 2,000 shows every year and attracting 8.2 million visitors.

“As the most internationally recognizable symbol of both Sydney and Australia, it has become our calling card to the world,” said the governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir.



Opera House chief Louise Herron said the huge crowds were a reminder “that the Opera House is, above all, the people’s palace.”

Utzon won an international design contest to build the harbor city an opera house in 1956, competing against 232 other entries from 28 countries, despite being relatively unknown in the architecture world.

His ambitious blueprint, drafted from photos and maps without ever having visited the harbor site, took 14 years and 102 million Australian dollars (100 million) to complete, funded by a state lottery.

It was one of the most difficult engineering feats ever attempted at the time, with Utzon envisaging a chamber with vaulted roofs unsupported by pillars or columns.

Custom-built French cranes were used to piece together the iconic sails segment by segment in midair, with precast concrete ribs interlocking in an intricate jigsaw.

Some 1,056,006 individual tiles coat the exterior, custom-made from clay and stone. Utzon was inspired by Japanese ceramic bowls, imagining that their pale matte finish would perfectly offset the blue of Sydney’s harbor and sky.

