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No great expectations from Christmas season – GRTU

By Julian Manduca

November is the month of the dead, and business-wise it is one of the low points in the year along with January and February, especially where retail business is concerned. As December kicks off the business community is hoping for an upswing, but not all are confident.

While many retail outlets usually sell more at Christmas time than during the rest of the year, some retail outlets told this newspaper that their expectations are not so high and Christmas orders have

been downsize.

The Malta Financial and Business Times spoke to Philip Fenech, the GRTU's Secretary General and president of its hospitality section who said: "One has to examine closely the customer base of each business and judge what proportion is dependent on tourism."

"We know that the tourism industry is going through a particularly bad patch, even if we are hoping for last minutes bookings."

"As for the retail trade this Christmas, there are those in business who are expecting more sales

before the VAT increase, but there will always be some sectors enjoying greater sales and others suffering less."

In a lighter vein, Fenech said: "When people awake with their hangovers on New Year's day they will also be aware that the price hikes start then."

But the GRTU is being careful to defend the retailers interests and has instructed its members not to round prices up when the VAT increase is included in the price structure.



French Finance Minister Francis Mer (L) greets EU Commissioner in charge of Monetary Affairs, Spain's Pedro Solbes in this file photo. The European Commission has backed away from a threat to go to court to force Germany and France to cut their budget deficits, seeking to avoid a legal wrangle that might damage confidence in the euro. Solbes said it would be "tricky" to win a European Union high court order striking down last week's decision by EU governments to let Germany and France ignore deficit limits. See full story on page 21

BoV awarded for world's best CRM strategy

Bank of Valletta has been awarded the 2003 Financial Innovation Award for the world's Best Customer Relationship Management Strategy by the UK's Institute of Financial Services.

In winning the prestigious accolade, Bank of Valletta beat out a number of world-leading competitors such as Primeline, Barclays Private Clients, Fortis Bank Asia and Allianz

Cornhill of Germany.

The award was presented to Bank of Valletta Chairman Joseph FX Zahra during the Sixth Annual Financial Innovation Awards ceremony held at the end of November at City Guildhall in London. The BOV delegation, led by the Chairman, included officials from the Bank's Strategy, Management and IT Departments.

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Government looking to attract yacht purchasers to Malta

- Sant attacks move as anti-social

Opposition leader Dr Alfred Sant has attacked the government for reducing the VAT payable on super yachts from 15 to five per cent. Sant said the decrease was unfair and socially unacceptable given that other sectors will have to face a higher tax on their purchases

with the increase of VAT from 15 to 18 percent.

The Malta Financial and Business Times is informed that the change aims to attract more business in what is being seen as a niche opportunity prior to EU entry. Speaking to the owner of a

yacht supplies business, The Malta Financial and Business Times was told that the idea of the VAT decrease is aimed at attracting foreigners to buy yachts and motor boats in Malta prior to EU entry.

Sant lambasted over Preluna comment

- verify before stating, Sant told

In a statement released yesterday, the Preluna Hotel's board took extreme exception to remarks passed by Opposition leader Alfred Sant to the effect that the hotel, a Sliema waterfront landmark, is to close its doors to business due to a

faltering economy.

"The Board categorically refutes such a statement," the Preluna's board announced yesterday. "In the better interest of the company, workers and industry it would be appreciated if verifications are

effected prior to statements with such far reaching and serious implications are made in public and during such serious debates."

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MSE Index: 2,143.360 - 0.051%

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World indices			Rates of exchange	
Index	Value	Change	EURO	2.3316
S&P	1069.81	-0.03%	US DOLLAR	2.7917
DJIA	9878.38	-0.21%	UK STERLING	1.6256
NASDAQ	1992.21	0.12%	SWISS FRANC	3.6223
FTSE	4378.9	-0.71%	JAPANESE YEN	305.6618
CAC 40	3471.86	-0.53%	CANADIAN DOLLAR	3.6438
DAX	3809.26	-0.31%	GOLD US Dollars	402.6250
H. SENG	12412.23	-0.36%	SILVER US Cents	544.0000

decisions.

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