



COLLABORATING PARTNER OF

# THE MALTA FINANCIAL & BUSINESS TIMES

ISSUE NO. 308

www.business-times.com.mt

## Drydocks' golden handshake scheme criticised

- Drydocks, Government should have integrated workers into private sector

By Matthew Vella

The dismantling and subsequent restructuring of the Malta Drydocks and its sister 'yards into two unlikely siblings - the Malta Shipyards Ltd (MSL), and the Industrial Projects and Services Ltd (IPSL) - has not won over the

employers of the private sectors. While the most 'gifted' of the new progeny is certainly MSL, which will be taking in first-choice workers to continue the work of the 'docks and the 'yards in its newly restructured and efficient framework, it is certainly the IPSL which comes across as the doltish

and least-endowed of offspring. Created as a surrogate entity for the surplus 900 workers of the Malta Drydocks and Malta Shipbuilding, the IPSL's employees will be offered early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes.

Continues on page 3

## Mixed feelings on Gatt's harsh PBS remarks

By Kurt Sansone

If the 'reform-or-bust' statements made by Minister Austin Gatt have created a state of unease among PBS employees and independent TV producers, not the same can be said of advertising agencies.

The general feeling in the advertising sector is that government would not go through with its threat to close down PBS. People in the sector have described Minister Gatt's remarks as a sweeping statement and are almost certain that for "political reasons" government would not dismantle the national broadcaster.

On the contrary, it is advertising agencies with audio-visual facilities that would stand to benefit from the new set up, *The Malta Financial and Business Times* was told.

With a more extensive policy to outsource TV productions, it is the independent production houses that would get a boost.

Preparations for new programmes to kick off in the January schedule normally start three months before but the uncertainty of the future of PBS has left TV producers in the dark, at least for the time being.

Continues on page 3

## Malta increasingly connected to digital world, figures reveal

By David Lindsay

Figures released by the National Statistics Office yesterday show that Malta is becoming more and more connected to the digital world with each passing month.

Evidencing this is the fact that Internet subscriptions have gone up 22 per cent, live mobile subscriptions have risen by 15.1 per cent, satellite dish use has grown by 21.9 per cent and the new Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone services have grown by a staggering 112.7 per cent.

Over this year's second quarter, between April and June, the number of Internet subscriptions in Malta rose by 22 per cent, or 12,964 and reached a grand total of 71,404. Now 17.9 per cent of the population is connected to the world wide web, as compared to just 14.8 a year earlier.

In June this year, the number of mobile subscriptions reached a peak of 275,156, representing an increase of 36,034 or 15.1 per cent over the same quarter last year.

Continues on page 2

## Industry registers half-year gains

Malta's total industry index has risen on all fronts, with the index itself rising 7.85 per cent, industry's employment and salary levels rising by a respective 6.88 and 10.14 per cent. The year-on-year figures, released just yesterday, are considered provisional and account for the first six months of the year.

The Capital Goods showed, by far, showed the most positive trend over the period in question. The segment's Turnover Index increased by 77.99 per cent, the Employment Index went up by 8.22 per cent, while an increase of 18.44 per cent in the Wages and Salaries index was registered.

Over the first half of the year, the Turnover Index of Consumer

Durable Goods group increased by 18.10 per cent over the period between January-June last year. Its Employment Index increased by 30.81 per cent. In the same period there was an increase of 18.02 per cent in the Wages and Salaries Index.

The Consumer Non-Durable Goods is one of the most stable groups. Its Turnover Index increased by 6.8 per cent as compared to the first six months of 2002. The Employment Index registered a slight increase of 0.59 per cent. In the same period, the Wages and Salaries Index rose by 2.67 per cent.

Continues on page 2

MSE Index: 2,110.675 -0.181%

see page 23

### Rates of exchange

EURO	2.3389
US DOLLAR	2.7406
UK STERLING	1.6195
SWISS FRANC	3.6210
JAPANESE YEN	296.7075
CANADIAN DOLLAR	3.5955
GOLD US Dollars	387.7750
SILVER US Cents	518.0000

### World indices

Index	Value	Change
S&P	1036.68	0.54%
DJIA	9670.47	0.65%
NASDAQ	1905	1.17%
FTSE	4272.9	0.51%
CAC 40	3352.15	1.38%
DAX	3577.63	1.72%
H. SENG	12091.88	2.91%

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