

# Business Today



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MSE (daily change)	BOV (weekly change)	HSBC (weekly change)	Lombard (weekly change)	GO (weekly change)	prices in euro	Winston J. Zahra page 10
-1.12% 4588.99	0.000% 5.500	-3.40% 4.400	0.000% 13.000	0.166% 3.015		

## MCESD to meet soon to discuss social partners' agenda

Charlot Zahra

The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) will be meeting soon to discuss a number of issues which have been put on the agenda by the social partners, Business Today has learnt.

Sources well-acquainted with the Council's workings told this newspaper that there were "a number of social and economic issues" on the agenda of the next meeting, which will be held "in the next few days, definitely by the end of this month".

However, when asked to comment whether cost of living was on the agenda of the next MCESD meeting, Chairman Sonny Portelli was mum on the matter.

"You know quite well that the agenda of the MCESD meeting is confidential and I will not divulge it to the press," Portelli told Business Today curtly.

The first meeting of the MCESD was held last Friday in the presence of Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Consultation Chris Said, who is politically responsible for the MCESD.

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# Car sales slump bad news for public coffers

## Motor Fair postponed indefinitely

David Darmanin

The pending car registration tax reform has resulted in what is probably the worst slump in car sales witnessed over the last decades.

"Showrooms are empty," a person involved in the industry said, while a spokesperson for the The Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre (MFCC) confirmed that the date set for the Motor Fair has been postponed indefinitely.

On its part, the Ministry of Finance does not yet have a position on whether targets set for revenue generated from motor vehicle registration tax will be affected by the end of the 2008 budgetary period.

Further to a complaint filed by MEP Joseph Muscat, the European Commission has called on Malta to review its considerations on levying VAT on imported cars, while it has pronounced its disagreement to minimum thresholds set on second hand cars imported from the EU.

Meanwhile, the government is drawing plans on how to modify the vehicle tax regime into a 'polluter pays' model, whereby the car tax due would increase in accordance to how much pollutant a vehicle emits. ▶ page 6



Visitors stroll through at the Sidney Motor Fair. Malta may not be following suit this year

## Olympic protests



Pro-Tibet demonstrators hang banners as they scale the cables of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to protest against the Chinese government as the city of San Francisco prepared to host the Olympic torch relay yesterday.

## World Business Highlights

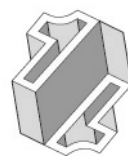
**Fed Officials Saw Contraction in First Half as 'Likely,' FOMC Minutes Show**  
Federal Reserve officials anticipated that the economy would shrink in the first half of the year, with some concerned about "a prolonged and severe economic downturn," as they cut interest rates last month.

**Washington Mutual Gets \$7 Billion From Bondman-Led Group, Slashes Payout**  
Washington Mutual Inc., the largest U.S. savings and loan, got \$7 billion from a group of investors led by David Bondman's TPG Inc. after losses on subprime loans ate up capital and erased 74 percent of its market value.

**Stocks in U.S. Decline on Earnings Results, Led by AMD; Europe, Asia Fall**  
U.S. stocks fell the most in seven days after the first signs of quarterly earnings disappointed investors, Washington Mutual Inc. slashed its dividend and pending home sales dropped more than forecast.

**IMF Forecasts \$945 Billion in Losses Stemming From U.S. Mortgage Turmoil**  
The International Monetary Fund said losses stemming from the U.S. mortgage crisis may approach \$1 trillion, citing a "collective failure" to predict the breadth of the crisis.

### FTSE 100



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FIMBank p.l.c.  
7th Floor, The Plaza Commercial Centre  
Bisazza Street, Sliema SLM 1640, Malta

www.fimbank.com  
info@fimbank.com  
T : 2132 2100

**FREEPHONE :: 800 73110**