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## Abela sworn in, officials blacklisted



Labour's Jason Micallef and Toni Abela not invited to investiture - pages 5,6,7 ▶

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAY ATTARD

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### Immigration is 'national crisis', 84% say

But majority don't know how many migrants have left Malta

THE perception of immigration as a crisis is rooted in wild misconceptions regarding the actual scale of the problem facing Malta, a MaltaToday survey shows. The survey reveals that 84% think Malta faces a "national crisis" because of immigration. But 50.4% believe that fewer than 500 migrants have been repatriated or left the island in the past five years. A further 5.7% believe no immigrants at all left the island in the

same period. There were 12,500 arrivals of irregular migrants since March 2002; Malta has repatriated 2,958 immigrants between January 2004 and September 2008, while experts like Martin Scicluna – a government advisor on this issue – contend that in total, over 7,000 have departed, either through repatriation or of their own accord.

**mt immigration survey**

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### Failed asylum seekers given six months' notice

Raphael Vassallo

GOVERNMENT has introduced a new policy at its open centres, whereby resident asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected a second time are being asked to vacate the premises within six months.

Alexander Tortell, director of the government's integration agency OAIWAS, confirmed that the new policy entered into force this week, adding that this sort of arrangement is standard practice everywhere else in Europe.

Currently there are 2,137 resi-

dents in Malta's open centres, of whom roughly half are understood to be failed asylum seekers.

It is not certain what will become of these people once they are asked to leave the open centres. The OAIWAS director told MaltaToday that they are being actively encouraged to avail themselves of voluntary repatriation programmes such as the EU co-funded AVR (Assisted Voluntary Return) programmes, or other similar programmes offered by the International Organisation of Migration.

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### Next Wednesday

As Malta gears up for Holy Week celebrations, MaltaToday Midweek dedicates a special edition to the crucial question: Are we...



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