

Valletta shopping declines due to parking problems

by Elaine Attard

With just a day before Christmas, business in the retail sector was not good as sales were lower than expected and parking being blamed as the main culprit, told The Malta Business Weekly has learnt.

Republic Street Businesses Association President, Paul Fenech, said yesterday that surveys saying that Christmas shopping this year will not be “phenomenal” unfortunately proved to be right.

Those in the driving seat scrutinise the parking situation at Valletta before deciding to go shopping there and very often they opt to go elsewhere, he added.

Mr Fenech highlighted the need for a concerted effort by all stakeholders, including the authorities, to upgrade the parking system in Valletta. Parking is like the lifeblood of a human body, Mr Fenech said.

Why should parking in Sliema and other towns be free when in Valletta it has to be paid for, he questioned.

He also compared the long-term park and ride users with those paying for the short-term Controlled Vehicle Access (CVA). “It is ridiculous. People, especially young persons, hate to receive bills at the end of the month, when they can spend the money elsewhere.

That is why the CVA system is counterproductive. It is a well-known fact that youngsters are going to Valletta less often. Long-term parking should not be for employees or business owners only. Those parking for 10 to 12 hours a day should be discouraged from using their private cars,” he continued.

Regarding the public transport reform he said that the RSBA is all for progress but cannot really tell if a better public transport system would encourage people to shop in Valletta, until the system is in place and running.

There should be more spaces allocated for parking outside Valletta, he insisted.

“Then again trends change and people’s habits shift. People seem to prefer shopping in other business areas that have developed over the years. We have to offer incentives to attract shoppers to Valletta,” he added.

Different segments of businesses on Republic Street reported different

reactions to Christmas shopping this year. Clothes and perfume retailers reported a decline in sales probably because the market is oversupplied with these products.
