

# Valletta, awake!

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Different vision... Architecture students are projecting their image for the capital city. Photos: Darrin Zammit Lupi

Architecture students guided Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi through their version of the capital city yesterday as they presented structures and artistic installations exhibited in Merchants Street.

"Valletta is waking up, but we want it to jump out of bed and burst into life," a student told Dr Gonzi.

More than 100 students took part in the annual workshop held over the weekend, where they got the chance to get their hands dirty alongside professionals working in the industry - an activity organised by SACES, the architecture students' organisation.

The students were divided into groups and had three days and €150 to embellish particular areas of the city in a creative and thoughtful way.

Dr Gonzi joked with the students saying the government also often found itself in a position of limited resources and tight deadlines, in which it must be creative.

The students explained their vision of Valletta, which included a fountain in Freedom Square, a revamped City Gate and various ways of highlighting the famous architecture.

The structures were made of different materials, ranging from typical Maltese limestone to metal cables and recycled plastic cups.

"First we identified problems such as a lack of seating, bad circulation of people and dull use of land, and then we came up with ways to improve each area," SACES member Karl Ebejer said.

One group spoke about the need to improve the land use of the whole city, focusing on the rehabilitation of abandoned houses to increase residential space, and the construction of boutique hotels to boost tourism. They also highlighted the need to revamp Republic Street to include more street entertainment and artistic statements.

The projects will be moved to the various streets and landmarks for which they were intended within a few days after the open-air exhibition at Merchants Street is closed.

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