

NATIONAL

Tunnel boreholes to clear picture on Malta-Gozo link

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Nine boreholes, both on land and on the seabed between Malta and Gozo, should establish a clearer picture of where the route of an underground tunnel between the two islands could eventually be dug.

Works, technically described as 'investigative coring', are currently being conducted by Italian firm Geotec Spa, which won a €751,000 tender issued by the government. According to information given to PN MP Chris Said by Transport Minister Ian Borg, the coring tests concern Mellieha and Cirkewwa in Malta and Ghajnsielem and Nadur in Gozo, while two boreholes are being dug in the Malta-Gozo strait.

Sources said that the cores will test the strength of the geology of the rock. Many more studies would be needed as these are still considered to form a preliminary phase of the project.

A Malta-Gozo permanent link has been long on the political agenda with many governments promising to study various options, particularly a bridge or an underground tunnel.

Although until a few years ago, the costs to construct such a mega-project were prohibitive when compared to the size of the Maltese economy, technology has advanced significantly in recent years



The boreholes will test the strength of the rock both on land and the seabed.
PHOTO: CHRIS SANT FOURNIER

pushing the costs of such a project, particularly a tunnel, significantly down.

Construction costs for such a project would still run into hundreds of millions of euros and take many years to be complete. Both major political parties promised the tunnel project in their electoral manifesto.

The latest initiative on the possibility to put in place a permanent link between the two islands was started by Gozo MP Chris

Said when he was a minister in the last PN administration. The idea was continued by the Labour administration when returned to power in 2013.

At first, Labour considered a bridge instead of a tunnel and commissioned a Chinese State entity to carry out the necessary studies.

However, later on in the legislature, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said the

focus will be on a tunnel and before the election even suggested that this project could be completed in seven years.

According to a recent study, 82 per cent of Gozitans are in favour of the tunnel and 13 per cent against.

Young people were mostly in favour, the elderly generally against.

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'It would appear the organs were stolen from the corpse'

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was not compatible with a fall from a height. An autopsy concluded that Mr Mansholt had been dead for around a week. The cause of death, however, was never established.

Autopsies carried out in Malta and Germany concluded that he had suffered no broken bones, which excludes the possibility of a fall.

According to a report by the Medical University of Hanover, Mr Mansholt's body was devoid of the heart, brain, neck organs, lungs, liver, pancreas, adrenal glands, the right kidney, the bladder, the stomach and the small intestine.

The only organs found inside Mr Mansholt's body were his left kidney, diaphragm, spleen and large intestine, they said.

In the criminal complaint filed through his lawyers, Veronique Dalli and Dean Hili, Berndt Mansholt told Police Commissioner Lawrence Cutajar that the explanation from the Maltese court expert had not been corroborated by the findings of the second autopsy.

The medico-legal expert appointed by the Maltese courts, Mario Scerri, told the father that his son's organs had been



Mike Mansholt, found dead at 17.

stolen from the corpse, perhaps disposed of without the consent of the family, particularly since the explanation being tendered to our client does not add up," Berndt Mansholt's lawyers wrote in the complaint.

"The explanation being tendered to our client does not add up"

They said their client had not been given any information by the Maltese authorities.

Even the autopsy report that he was given was blank, while the case file he obtained through official channels was incomplete, with missing documents and missing photographs of the discovery of the body.

The family want the police to investigate the court expert in terms of an article in the criminal code which deals with anyone who suppresses or in any other manner destroys or alters any circumstantial evidence relating to an offence.

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Compilation today

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Muscat (il-Kohhu) said this was grounds for recusal, prompting an instant retort from lawyer Jason Azzopardi, appearing *parte civile* for the Caruana Galizia family. A fired-up Dr Azzopardi said that, according to court rules, the compilation of evidence against the three men had to begin within 30 days of them being first charged.

Defence legal aid lawyer Martin Fenech, however, insisted on the importance of justice not only being done, but being seen to be done.

The three men were charged with murder, and a series of other offences such as forming part of an organised crime gang, on December 5. Court rules dictate that the compilation of evidence against them must be completed by January 4 if they are not to be unconditionally discharged and let off the hook. According to Maltese law, only the President can extend that 30-day timeframe.

Reading from a prepared statement, Dr Azzopardi said a mother, a wife, a daughter, and a journalist had been killed in this "terrorist attack" and urged the court not to be "manipulated" by those who would seek to evade justice.

But the magistrate, citing European Court of Human Rights judgments, said her recusal would not jeopardise the case.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said earlier that he was confident that the Chief Justice and the court administration would not allow the case to collapse on a technicality.