

Editorial:

Gozo-Malta Links - Again

It is a well-known Maltese saying that ‘the tongue seeks the rotten tooth’. What hurts most will be at the fore-front of news and issues discussed.

It is no wonder, therefore, that yet again another solution has been proposed to the everlasting problem of Gozitan isolation, this time through the creation of a tunnel under the sea, linking Gozo and Malta.

There is no doubt that, even with the much-improved boat service plying between the two islands, there are those who believe that service can be improved. When one witnesses the thousands of Gozitans who have to cross every day, wasting the best of a couple of hours each way, one realises that indeed this is a problem.

So the suggestion made by the Gozitan Parliamentary Secretary Chris Said to build a tunnel has met with considerable approval from many sections of the Gozitan community, including that of the Gozo Business Chamber. A number of benefits would result from such a fast link including better trading facilities with considerable economic benefits to Gozo.

Some of the difficulties envisaged include the huge cost that such a major project would entail, estimated at well-over 150 million euro. Chris Said stated that it would be financed by private investors together with funds from the EU. He is optimistic that the cost could be recouped in 15 years.

It has also been pointed out that a Gozo tunnel could present serious problems in view of the depth of the sea between the islands - which is about 30 metres deep. It is envisaged that the tunnel would have to be 50 meters below the sea-bed.

There is no doubt that such a link would have major social and environmental impact affecting life in Gozo. Any feasibility study must include an examination of these effects. From practically any point of view Gozo will no longer be an island, and this will no doubt have a lasting effect on several issues. It is well to bear in mind that what Gozo has to offer is based on the very fact that it is an island. Joining it to Malta would make it just another place beyond Mellicha.

Maurice Cauchi



The Gozo Channel as seen from Nadur.