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Golfing - red herrings and the final countdown

I heard on the grapevine that a decision will finally be taken on the protracted Tal-Virtù golf course on July 29. This is not tantamount to a public hearing, which was held last year.

Horseplay can be suspected when one gets to know that the golf course applicant has submitted a new application for a golf course, even before his original application has been fully addressed.

The site boundary for the new golf course application (2871/04) is a carbon copy of the original one (4179/99) with the exception of one field in the Il-Bajjiet area close to Triq ta’ Gianpula. Hence, the following questions beckon:

Why exclude that one field in the fresh application? Does it belong to a big cheese who fretted over its inclusion in a golf course? Why submit an entirely new application rather than amend the original one, even before the original application has been fully discussed? Does the applicant have the powers of a Cassandra (or better still, has he been empowered with a watertight surmise) such that he knows that his first application will be turned down on the merits of that one field?

The same developer has been publicising the Tal-Virtù golf course for months now, even though a decision is still in the offing. The letter to The Sunday Times by Dr Carmelo Aquilina titled 'Golf courses in Malta - and China' (June 13) is worthy of an accolade since it could be an eye-opener for aridity-stricken Malta.

Dr Aquilina rightly states that the Chinese government is moving fast to curb the Chinese frenzy for golf courses, which is undermining the country’s already dour freshwater and arable land and situation.

I quote verbatim from his letter: “China, with its vast natural resources and spaces, is clamping down on irresponsible golf developers because it wants to preserve arable land and conserve water. Maltese politicians on the other hand are still incapable of saying 'no' to a developer who wants to consume up a huge chunk of scarce prime arable land and would then consume an immense quantity of water which is already scarce.”