It happened in January

The great earthquake that hit Malta in 1693

In January, in the midst of the bitter cold, the island of Malta was shaken by a powerful earthquake. The tremor, which was felt across the island, caused significant damage and loss of life. The earthquake struck on the second Sunday of January, causing widespread panic and destruction. It started at 2pm, and lasted for several minutes, shaking the earth and destroying many buildings.

In the wake of the earthquake, the local government and the people sought divine mercy and intercession by praying to the saints, particularly to St Paul. The cathedral was actually already in hand before the earthquake struck, but the destruction of the city caused by the earthquake accelerated its construction.

The well-known Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafa, who prepared the plans for the erection of the present cathedral of Malta and Gozo, was among the architects involved in the reconstruction efforts. Gafa's plans included a new cathedral for Malta, which was later completed in 1712.

The earthquake caused significant damage to the cathedral and other buildings in the city. The dome of the cathedral was severely damaged, and parts of the building were left in ruins. The damage extended beyond the cathedral, affecting other important buildings such as the Auberge de Castille and the Auberge de France.

Despite the destruction, the people of Malta quickly got back on their feet. They worked tirelessly to rebuild their homes and lives. The cathedral, which had been in a deplorable state for a long time and was facing demolition, was spared and continued to stand as a testament to the resilience of the Maltese people.

The earthquake had a lasting impact on the history of Malta, and it marked a turning point in the development of the island. It also highlighted the importance of disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts to minimize the impact of future earthquakes.

The earthquake of January 1693 remains one of the most significant events in the history of Malta, shaping the island's architecture, culture, and future development.