

PM meeting Piano today

Ivan Camilleri

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi will today be discussing the final details on the Valletta entrance €80 million project with world-renowned architect Renzo Piano during a meeting at Mr Piano's building workshop in Paris.

Dr Gonzi flew to Paris following yesterday's summit in Brussels, for today's meeting. Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt will accompany Dr Gonzi.

Sources told The Times that Mr Piano is expected to show Dr Gonzi the final scale models of the project, including some changes to the original plans requested by the government following various consultations.

"We are going to see the final plans so that we can get the ball rolling," Dr Gonzi told The Times in an enthusiastic tone.

Asked to specify when physical works on the project are expected to start, Dr Gonzi did not want to give a precise time-frame as he said that this depends on Mepa's decision to grant the necessary permits.

"We hope that work can start in just a few weeks time but we need Mepa's permits first," he said.

Renzo Piano's Valletta project will change the whole entrance of Malta's capital city and will also include the building of a new seat for Parliament and an open-air theatre on the remains of the Old Valletta theatre destroyed more than 60 years ago during World War II.

Originally it was said that the project should be completed by the end of the current legislature in 2013.

Comments

C.camilleri (3 hours, 19 minutes ago)

The government is always harping that he cannot do more cause of the international economic crises. So the most logical question comes to mind. Is this project first in the government priorities and can we really afford it at these times of crises?

Ronald Galea (3 hours, 41 minutes ago)

Serraht mohhi issa. Grazzi gonz, for perfect prioritization !!

g.c.Forte (4 hours, 53 minutes ago)

@ Clifton K. Barbara.....Haqqek punt u capcipa...llqajt il musmar fuq rasu...ghedt dak li min ghandu rasu f'lokha ghandu jifhem... proset.

Anthony Roberts (6 hours, 2 minutes ago)

Its not only a waste of money but not everyone liked the plan. I would have liked to have seen the other tenders' plans to have had a choice. Who wants a new Parliamentary seat right at the entrance to this beautiful city. Tourists come to get away from all that, but the first thing they will see is business rather than pleasure.

Clifton K. Barbara (6 hours, 38 minutes ago)

Dear Maltese our only source of income is tourism but we are killing it. How would you feel if you go to a Rome and see a modern building next to the Colosseum or go to London and tell them to move parliament from Big Ben to a modern one or go to Paris and tell them to remove the arch d'triumph cause it's a truck cannot pass through. I am sure you will be shoot. We are stupid people and we deserve to be ruled by stupid men. We are blind not to take to the streets and demand what we want. We are not patriotic we lost our love for this land, we gave up everything to foreign rule once more. The person to blame is no one but ourselves. I wish that the parliament stays where it is and expand to abundant buildings. The gate is restored to how it was. Build the stairways as they once were. I agree with the ditch but include the freedom square as well for real gardens (not stone). The Theater should be the marvel of all not some random greek theatre. Whats that suppose to mean!

Patrick Refalo (6 hours, 39 minutes ago)

Finally!!! hope that work will start as soon as possible and eliminating any chances of building the particular building as it once was!!!

mario nicholas pace (7 hours, 37 minutes ago)

Just a waste of money . Does not the Prime minister has anything more useful to use this money for?

g.c.Forte (8 hours, 21 minutes ago)

@ J.Azzopardi.....In our great City we have 3 of the most lovely gardens in Europe, we do not need another one in a ditch, with only 1 or 2 hours of sun, and the only view are walls (bastions). So, if the time for majestic gates are gone, why the government are spending money to restore Victoria Gate ? Why not put down all our historical gates for you. Can you tell me what to do,if I will be watching the Aida in an open air theater and it start raining or a pigeon will drop bombs on me. As for parliament, yes I agree to be in the City, but as the normal way, in the center and not at the entrance. Carnival has been done in Valletta since it is recorded, means go

back in the knights era, more than 400 years, why had to be us living in the 2010 to take it away from Valletta.

Christian Ellul (9 hours, 15 minutes ago)

@ Mario Aquilina

Your comment makes me laugh. As far as I know PL is experienced in not doing a full legislature not PN.

rmallia (10 hours, 1 minute ago)

what a waste of money...what a pity...especially when considering many people are increasingly finding it more difficult to reach end of month with ease, with the lousy wages we have in this country. When are we going to be EU members on all levels?

N.Calleja (10 hours, 18 minutes ago)

Those who are against the project try their best to discourage the PN government to shelf it just because they are envious that when completed it will be added to all the other magnificent buildings built during the last years. That's why they are so much against it!

J Azzopardi (10 hours, 50 minutes ago)

Actually quite a few will applaud Dr Gonzi for having the courage shown in embarking on this project. I can't wait to see it done.

@ Martin Vella

Gardens are the best replacement for car parks. As Renzo Piano once said himself if people will be continued to be offered parking spaces they will continue to use cars. Cars dear Mr Vella, kill urban spaces with their presence, kill people with their fumes, and kill the planet with their emissions. Trees on the other hand remedy all these ills.

@ Charles Caligari Conti

The time for A Majestic Gate has gone..

A Maltese Roofed Theatre will serve the few while the square it will function as while not being used for performances will be enjoyed by all.

Carnival can be anywhere while Parliament needs to be in the capital.

A. Baldacchino (11 hours, 13 minutes ago)

The entrance to Valletta should be modelled on the old original doorway to preserve the character of the City.

Parliament and the Office of the Prime Minister could best be housed in the majestic Auberge de Castille, incorporating adjoining buildings. This would also release precious space to the overall project.

The theatre, in whatever form, should be built anew, disgarding the old remanis, and definitley roofed.

Carmel Garcia (11 hours, 33 minutes ago)

Dr Gonzi jekk jogbok, tahlix flusna fix-xejn. Inkella ghamel ix-xoghol sewwa u t-teatru ghamlu msaqqaf, il-bieb tal-belt ghamlu bieb bhal ma kien jew jixbhu qabel sar dan li ghandna issa biex ikun jaqbel mal-arkittetura tas-swar u l-parlament ghamlu x'imkien f'Sant Iermu u l-Misrah il-Helsien ghamlu gnien jew pjazza sabiha fejn il-popolin ikollhom fejn jistrieħu. Tkunx rasek iebsa izjed u tahlilna flusna hekk kapricc tieghek.

g.c.Forte (11 hours, 35 minutes ago)

@ G. Portelli.....Waste of money already been spent on the first proposals, how much money is going to be spent on the second proposals, and if the P.M, is not happy with them, what is going to happen? try another plan ? I agree with you, that our City (where I was born, and proud) deserved a nice entrance (I do not know why it is not called CITY GATE now) but sure not the one of Mr. Piano`s, one simple reason is that if Pope Pius V road will be abolish, the entrance to Valletta concerning deliveries will be impossible. I wish you to give me your idea of how this problem can be solved. If you are not from the city, do not try, otherwise you will be talking nonsense. I do not care about Iceland or any other country, I care about MY country for the high water /elect tariffs, the unemployment, the instability of our parliament, the back stabbing P.N. v.s P.N., the cost of living, the criminality, drugs, the tourist industry ect..ect..ect.. I do not think that we can find a space to write all these shameful things beneath the P.M..

Paul Galea (11 hours, 42 minutes ago)

Instead of acting as a dictator Dr Gonzi should consider whether it is more reasonable to spend €80 million on health care and keep it free and not spend them in order to ruin the entrance of Valletta.

By the Health care reform the government is proposing that health care will no longer be free.

Perhaps Dr Gonzi wants to convert the Valletta entrance and remove its door since he is already envisaging the multitude of beggars who will be piling (the sky is the limit) on each other at Bieb il Belt, resulting from the health care reform.

J.Tonna (11 hours, 44 minutes ago)

Shall we be able to hear this PIANO CONCERTO.

U mela noqghod ninkwieta. This PM was elected to govern and that is what he is doing.

steve compagno (12 hours, 7 minutes ago)

Although we DO need to work on Valletta, I think it would have been better to have a holistic project by working on the bus terminus. Are the buses going to work underground in the future? Will we convert the bus terminus into a nice piazza?

Joann Bugeja (12 hours, 19 minutes ago)

what !? Still grumbling about this project !! On the contrary, I can't wait for this project to start !

For those who like counting the chickens before they are hatched, I suggest wait for the final project to be completed first & then judge! all the best mr.gonzi...!!!

Martin Vella (12 hours, 24 minutes ago)

Before wasting €80,000,000 on a senseless project which as proposed shall serve just to kill the economic activity in Valletta i sincerely hope that the Primeminister will consider the following proposals:

1) Scrap the idea of having a garden in the ditch to the detriment of Parking. The country cannot afford to add more expensis to its maintenance list .

2) Parking in Valletta is desperately needed . This is the chance to excavate five or six floors beneath the whole of pjazza helsien (and the old theatre) to construct an underground carpark with an entrance from the yellow garage. A further two or three level carpark can also be built in the ditch whist respecting the safety of the bastions by keeping the building a safe distance away.

3) The bridge above the main gate could remain so that it will continue to provide adequate access into Valletta and it would probably be wiser just to dress the present door by constructing a look alike of the external part of original gate. This could be done on both sides of the gate.

Once the car park beneath the square is constucted build a parliament which suits Valletta (not modern)!

gxuereb (12 hours, 27 minutes ago)

Piano, piano Mr. Prime Minister! No one will applaude you for enbarking on such an expensive project at a time when the country is in an economic mess.....first things, FIRST!

victor pulis (12 hours, 34 minutes ago)

Why are we still speaking of 80 million euros when it was reported that Renzo Piano's final fee is still unknown?

mario gellel (12 hours, 37 minutes ago)

THEY COULD NOT HAVE PLANNED THE MEETING ON A BETTER DAY---
"CARNIVAL OPENING DAY."

G.Portelli (12 hours, 45 minutes ago)

@g.c.Forte

A referendum will be a waste of money. Our capital city deserves a grand entrance and that is what our government is going to do. Your suggestion of a statue of the prime minister in a prime location is a great idea. The words beneath the statue should read

"This is the person who during a worldwide recession has steered Malta to safer waters. Had it not been for the PN of whom this person is a leader Malta would have succumbed like other nations - look at Iceland"

pat camilleri (12 hours, 49 minutes ago)

Dr Gonzi, I just want to say again that many people do not want this plan to go ahead. Please listen to us or have a referendum. No modern gate, no open air theater, and no parliament. Restore the palaces in Valletta. They are falling to pieces and only big organizations can afford to do that. Please listen, with our taxes restore Valletta.

g.c.Forte (13 hours, 14 minutes ago)

Dear Prime Minister.....More than 50 % of the public are against the whole or part of this project. Will you please stop being arrogant and listen.....Do a referendum before you waste OUR money, when everybody knows the financial situation of our country. If you want to do something for our country, so our children will keep on remembering you.....make a nice statue of you and put it somewhere prominent, with a message which goes like this... " This is the most wise Prime Minister that on a difficult financial time which our country experienced, he used our money wisely, and not waste them on a stupid project, which is not going to be productive " .

Mario Aquilina (13 hours, 17 minutes ago)

"Originally it was said that the project should be completed by the end of the current legislature in 2013."

Mela hawn xi hadd jemmen li din il-legislatura ser tispicca fl-2013?? Ghandna Gvern qed jaqa' bicciet...

Charles Caligari Conti (13 hours, 23 minutes ago)

I hope that the final plans will include :-

1. A Majestic Gate and not a Hole in the Wall.
2. A Maltese Roofed Theatre - and not a Greek Theatre.
3. A Place for Carnival and not a place for Parliament. (Albeit both may go hand in hand).