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Causeway

MALAYSIA'S PROPOSAL NOT A SURPRISE, SAYS GOH

SINGAPORE, July 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's suggestion to replace the existing causeway with a bridge did not come as a surprise, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has said.

Media reports today quoted him as saying that measures to improve water flow in the Johor Straits was something he had discussed before with Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

Goh said one idea was to drill holes into the causeway, which linked Johor Baharu and Woodlands in Singapore, but this was dropped after it was agreed that it would prove ineffective.

This is the first time the Singapore Prime Minister has commented on his Malaysian counterpart's suggestion of replacing the 1.2 km causeway, built by the British in 1923 and opened in 1924, with a bridge.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad proposed this possibility when he launched on Friday the RM6-billion JB Waterfront City project, a mixed property development near the causeway, which would become Johor Baharu's new central business district.

Goh said Singapore has yet to be notified officially of the proposal to replace the causeway with a bridge.

He said the island republic would study it when an official proposal was put forward.

Deputy Prime Minister Brig Gen Lee Hsien Loong had told the local media on Saturday that the Malaysian proposal "was interesting and that Singapore would study it".

He said Johor was developing and Singapore hoped there would be more synergy between Malaysia's southern state and Singapore although the governments of both countries have yet to officially discuss the matter.

A Second Link bridge is being built by the governments of Malaysia and Singapore linking Tanjung Kupang in Johor and Tuas in Singapore which is expected to be completed by the end of next year.

Some 100,000 people cross the causeway daily in either direction now as compared with about 17,000 daily when immigration control was imposed between the two countries in July 1967. -- BERNAMA

THG TS