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Mahathir-bridge

PROPOSED M'SIA-INDON BRIDGE NOT MEGA PROJECT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the proposed bridge linking Peninsula Malaysia with Sumatera could be delayed eventhough it was not considered a mega project.

He said although the government had announced the project, it would obviously take years before it could take off.

"We have to do the feasibility study...work on the design, we have to do all kinds of things," he said at a press conference at the end of the three-day Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir was asked if construction of the bridge would be among other projects to be re-scheduled following his earlier announcement that three projects would be deferred in the wake of the depreciation of the ringgit.

"That can be delayed, it doesn't matter but it would seem that people object to this for other reasons which we don't understand.

"Somehow or rather, they would not like to see us build this bridge," he said.

"Already they are talking about this as a mega project. It's going to cost us RM6 billion, that's not much because we are presently building just one of the LRT (light rail transit) lines at a cost of RM4.3 billion.

"That is only about one and a half billion ringgit more, so it is not a mega project.

"But of course if we go ahead with it, they are going to push down our currency and make life difficult for us," he said.

Dr Mahathir questioned why the critics hated Malaysia so much and reasoned that this might be due to it being much better off than most countries which do not have the so-called mega projects.

"We have done these projects all this while and the country has grown at eight per cent, inflation rate is among the lowest in the world at three per cent, our companies are doing well," he said.

He said the nation was also harmonious and peaceful apart from having political stability.

"What is wrong with our fundamentals? Why are they labelling these as mega projects and want to prevent us from doing it," he asked.

On a cynical note, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was prepared to cut the bridge into two sections if it was too long.

"We have already promised that we will not ever build any building higher than the Sears Tower (in Chicago) but now Shanghai has got one which is taller than us.

"I think people should be happy that we don't have the highest building in the world," he said.

During a recent live interview with CNN, Dr Mahathir had also been asked about the proposed bridge, which he said would bring a lot advantages such as making it easier for workers to travel and encourage the setting-up of labour-intensive industries. -- Bernama

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