

Massive growth in Johor with new bridge

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JOHOR BARU: The proposed new bridge to Singapore which will replace the 80-year-old Causeway will bring about massive infrastructure development in the Tanjung Puteri area here.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the multi-billion ringgit project would involve the construction of a new Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex and road interchanges.

He said the project would kick off with the reclamation of the Tebrau Straits at the end of this year.

"The reclamation works, expected to be completed in nine months, will create 35ha land.

"According to the initial plan, the CIQ complex will be on this land as well as a section of the bridge," he said after chairing the exco meeting yesterday.

He said the CIQ complex was expected to be ready in 2005.

"Once the complex is ready, we will proceed with the construction of the bridge on our side which is said to be about 1km long and will take a year to complete.

"The bridge will be built parallel

to the Causeway and all the water pipes and rail track would be moved to the bridge.

"The Causeway will be de-commissioned in 2007," he said.

The Causeway, which has also been described by many Johoreans and Singaporeans as more than just a physical linkage between them for more than 80 years has been blamed for causing the Tebrau Straits to be polluted.

This and the increased traffic volume prompted Malaysia to propose the bridge.

Abdul Ghani said interchanges to link the road from the bridge to the North-South Highway would also be built.

During the recent State Assembly in July, Abdul Ghani had said that the plan, first mooted in 1998, was not implemented due to the indecisiveness of the Singapore government.

However, Singapore through its Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew gave the nod to the proposal during his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Putrajaya on Tuesday.