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Strait bridge plan altered

Dan Guen Chin

THE proposed bridge to replace the existing Johor Causeway, which was first mooted two years ago, will now take on a different look.

Instead of the original proposal which was to have been a futuristic "birdwing" bridge linking the two countries, the new plan entails a road bridge which would be built entirely on Malaysian soil and overs its water and which would be joined to the existing Causeway on the Singapore border.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was briefed on the new proposal during his visit to the site of the proposed Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex at Jalan Bukit Cagar in Johor Baru yesterday, was impressed with what he saw and heard.

He was briefed by Datuk Yahya Jalil, director of Gerbang Selatan Bersepadu (GBS), the company which is putting together the plan for the new bridge including the new CIQ complex and the construction of a series of ring roads and interchanges.

"It looks good and the Government will make a decision soon. In any case, the proposed project would benefit everybody," said Dr Mahathir.

He also said the proposal to build the bridge did not need to have the consent of the Singapore Government as everything that needs to be built would be on Malaysian territory.

"It doesn't involve them and we don't have to ask them (the Singapore Government) for permission," said Dr Mahathir.

He said that the proposed project would solve the traffic congestion in Johor Baru as the situation has reached an unacceptable level.

Under the GBS proposal, the new bridge would have a clearance height of 25 metres, which would allow pleasure boats and barges to ply underneath.

Once ready, the existing Causeway on the Malaysian side would be demolished to allow water to flow through the Tebrau Straits again, thus enhancing the quality of water and overcoming stagnation.

Also, rail links between the two countries would be maintained on a separate bridge using a "single leaf swing bridge".

GSB also proposed a series of inner ring roads and interchanges which would lead to the North-South Expressway with the entire project expected to take four years to complete.

bizdesk@nstp.com.my

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