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Singapore twisted new bridge issue: Syed Hamid

JOHOR BARU: Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Singapore has manipulated the issue over the construction of a new bridge to replace the Johor Causeway by saying it is part of a package of issues being discussed by the two countries.

According to Syed Hamid, Malaysia informed Singapore of its intention to build the bridge only as a sign of respect for the neighbouring country as the Johor Causeway is also part of the republic.

The republic had been informed in several meetings in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore that the construction of the new bridge was not part of the

package being discussed. However, it was still adamant with its stand.

Syed Hamid said this to reporters after opening the simultaneous meetings of the Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri movements in the Johor Baru division.

He was commenting on the statement by the Singapore Foreign Ministry on Saturday which described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as "an entertaining story-teller" after his disclosure that Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong did not agree to the construction of the new bridge because of Goh's nostalgia over the Causeway.

"He turns it around, saying it (construction of the bridge) is part of the package ... that's why he can't agree. Actually, there is no agreement with him to build the bridge jointly but there are discussions," he said.

According to Syed Hamid, it was also not proper for Singapore to describe Mahathir as a "story-teller" because what was being disclosed by the prime minister was stated during the four-eyed meeting with Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"What was told by Mahathir was not nonsensical. He was talking about a true incident and it was his recollection, which I can vouch for," he said.