

Mahathir brushes off Jaya's remarks

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has brushed off remarks by a Singaporean minister who had described him as an "entertaining story teller."

"It doesn't matter, that is his comment," he said, referring to Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar's description of him when Dr Mahathir disclosed that Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had not agreed to the project to replace the Causeway due to Goh's nostalgia for the link.

When pointed out that it was a never-ending story on Malaysia-Singapore bilateral ties, Dr Mahathir said: "Yeah ... but I'm not going to continue the story."

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters yesterday after taking part in a dry run and dress rehearsal for the

Non-Aligned Movement Summit at the Putra World Trade Centre.

On Friday, Dr Mahathir said he had been informed by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew that Goh was not in favour of the project.

"Because he (Goh) has a sense of nostalgia over the Causeway, he (Lee) said that we (Malaysia and Singapore) can construct the bridge after Goh Chok Tong's retirement. This is what he (Lee) told me," Dr Mahathir said.

At a separate function yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said he would not waste his time to respond to Singapore's "unkind and ungenerous description" of Malaysia.

"I think it is not unusual for Singapore to play this type of games. I think we will be wasting our time if we response

because we have better things to do."

"Let them say whatever they want to say. I think the facts are very clear no matter how they spin it," he said.

In Singapore, Goh Chok Tong has described Dr Mahathir as "a very good spin doctor" after his disclosure that Goh had opposed the building of a new bridge to link both countries.

"We in Singapore are less good at spinning stories. We prefer the more serious approach," the *Straits Times* quoted him as saying.

Goh said that Singapore's approach on the bilateral dispute was a "simple one", noting that despite negotiations that lasted some four years, the gap between the two countries had not closed, but had "become wider with each successive round."