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## Gerbang Perdana's great ambitions

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THE Johor Causeway linking Johor Baru and Woodlands in Singapore was officially opened in 1924 after five years of construction.

While it was adequate then, it is no longer the case owing to the increasing level of traffic between Malaysia and Singapore.

The main focus of the road network in Johor Baru is in the Central Business District (CBD), which has evolved around the Causeway.

On July 5, 1996, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced that a new bridge would be built to replace the congested Causeway.

Since then, Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd (Gerbang) has been developing a proposal to build the bridge and redevelop the existing Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facilities, including improving the road networks in the CBD.

It submitted a privatisation proposal for the Southern International Gateway (SIG) project to the Economic Planning Unit on Dec 24, 1999.

On Nov 1, 2001, the Government directed Gerbang Perdana to consider an alternative proposal to the SIG project and with this, the Gerbang Selatan Bersepadu (GSB) project came into existence.

Dr Mahathir then kick-started the GSB project with a ground-breaking ceremony on Feb 14.

The Government issued the Letter of Award to Gerbang Perdana on April 2 to go ahead with the project.

The multi-billion ringgit GSB project comprises a high-tech new Customs, Immigration and Quarantine complex costing RM1.5 billion and an elevated futuristic 1.5km bridge replacing part of the 69-year-old 1.2km Causeway.

The CIQ complex is an integrated structure spread over 29.5ha of reclaimed land extending some 300m from the shoreline.

The GSB project will also include the building of new interchanges and road upgrading works as well as the construction of a new rail link to Singapore.

Alongside the project, a RM2 billion mixed waterfront development project called the Tanjung Puteri Development will also be undertaken.

The five-phase development project over 10 years will be undertaken by Konsortium Tanah Sdn Bhd on a 60.93ha site next to the new bridge.

Upon completion, the project will comprise condominiums and apartments, a market place, a fisherman's wharf, office and commercial buildings, a shopping centre, an Asean village, five and four-star hotels, a mosque, and an artificial beach.

A lot of benefits could be gained from the project, such as improving traffic flow in the CBD. The international traffic will be diverted to avoid congestions and provide easy access for local traffic in the city.

In terms of tourism, maritime activities such as pleasure boating in the Straits of Johor could further promote tourism as well as promote development of related industries such as boat building.

The removal of the Causeway on the Malaysian side and demolition of the existing structures (including the existing CIQ facilities) will be undertaken once all the other components have been completed.

A 100m-wide navigational channel will also be constructed after the removal of the Causeway and demolition of existing structures.

The total duration for the GSB project is about 34 months with the Integrated CIQ Complex and the Road Bridge being operational by the end of

2005.

The full completion of the project components is by April 2007.