

## **Dr M told me to revive crooked bridge, says PM**

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Since becoming prime minister, Najib Abdul Razak has had several meetings with former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad before, where they discussed government policies.

In a pre-recorded interview with TV3 this evening, Najib revealed that Mahathir had made some demands during the meetings, including the "scenic bridge" project across the Straits of Johor.

"He had a few things he wanted me to do and I gave my views on the issues. For example, he disagreed with BR1M (cash handouts) and he asked me to build the crooked bridge to replace the Johor-Singapore Causeway.

"I gave my views on these issues. I see it as discussions between two individuals... It is quite healthy to have a difference in opinion, but in the end, I still have to be accountable to the rakyat and the party.

"Most of these issues were brought to cabinet and cabinet will decide on it," said Najib.

### **The Pak Lah experience**

The "scenic bridge" was conceived during the Mahathir-administration as a means of allowing the Straits of Johor to flow and allow ships to pass under.

The bridge was also designed to overcome traffic congestions faced by the 92-year-old Johor-Singapore Causeway.

However, the project was jettisoned in 2006 after preliminary construction work had commenced by Mahathir's hand-picked successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who appeared apprehensive of "mega-projects" that the Mahathir-administration was famous for.

This was widely seen as one of the key reasons why Mahathir went on a fierce campaign to unseat Abdullah between 2006 and 2007.

By raising this issue during the interview, it is likely that Najib was implying that he was being subjected to the same treatment Mahathir gave Abdullah.

### **'Dr M not allowed in my house'**

Meanwhile, Najib also said meetings with Mahathir were conducted at the latter's residence.

"When I discuss things with him, I showed him that I still respect him, even though I am the prime minister. I go to his house, I do not allow him to come to my house.

"But whatever it is, when we discuss things, I have to make decisions as the prime minister," he said.

Najib, earlier on in the interview, had said that although he respected Mahathir, it was important for him to make decisions as the country's prime minister, regardless of what others say.

"I still respect the former prime minister, Dr Mahathir, just like how I respect the rakyat. I am open to any quarters who want to criticise my administration. I take note and consider each and every criticism.

"But I must stress that I make decisions as the prime minister, as the president of Umno. I am responsible to all Malaysians.

"Whatever the opinion of an individual is, at the end of the day, I am responsible to the rakyat and party."

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