

**Crooked bridge: Ex-minister stokes fiery issue**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**May 10, 2007**  
**Yoges Palaniappan**

A former minister today raised the contentious bridge issue between Malaysia and Singapore which led to former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad locking horns with his successor.

Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the Malaysian government should push for a straight bridge instead of a crooked one.

The former information minister told this reporters at the Parliament lobby. At the outset of the press conference, he said the time has come for him to talk. "I have been keeping quiet for a long time."

According to him, the proposal to construct a crooked bridge did not make sense.

He said the government had negotiated for a crooked bridged because it thought Singapore would not agree to a straight one.

Last year, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had decided to scrap the crooked bridge project, which was mooted by Mahathir.

This led Mahathir to lambast his handpicked successor and accuse him of pandering to the wishes of Singapore.

**Appoint respectable person**

Meanwhile, Abdul Kadir said: "If they (Malaysia) can convince the Singapore government for a straight bridge, there will be no need for a crooked bridge."

The Kulim parliamentarian also made several suggestions which he felt would be useful for the negotiations between Malaysia and Singapore.

Among this, was to appoint a person respected in Malaysia and Singapore to head the negotiation team.

Abdul Kadir, who was also the former culture, arts and tourism minister, said the candidate must be respected in Johor as well, which borders the republic.

"He must be respected by the people of Johor because most of the issues being discussed are related to the state," he added.

Abdul Kadir told reporters that he had someone in mind but preferred to let the government make the decision.

He also felt that the negotiation would be more effective if it was spearheaded by the Prime Minister's Department as opposed to the Foreign Ministry.

"The Foreign Ministry takes such a long time to resolve the issues involved, they have no sense of urgency and they have no power to amend certain things along the negotiation," he said.

On the other hand, he said, the prime minister could react to such issues more swiftly and effectively.

"The prime minister has the power to move things quickly, he can easily resolve an issue by just making a phone call," he added.

### **All outstanding issues**

He also said the negotiation must cover all outstanding issues, namely the construction of a bridge, water supply to Singapore, Central Provident Fund (CPF), the using of Malaysian air space and also KTM land in Singapore.

"Negotiations with Singapore were first initiated to resolve all issues. From my point of view, finding solutions for all issues in a package is simpler than resolving one issue at a time.

"We can expect more tolerance from both parties. For instance, if we give Singapore concession for the bridge, we might get concession for water from them instead," he said.

"Otherwise, when one issue is resolved, we will face problems with the others," he added.

Abdul Kadir also urged the Malaysian government to work with Singapore on economic integration.

"Malaysia's economy is going through a boom time. The foundations are being strengthened so that the boom time will last longer. Singapore too is being prepared for a long time boom," he said, adding that it will not make sense if both countries do not take advantage of the favourable situation.

"From the statements made by Singapore leaders lately, there seems to be more readiness to understand, to accept and accommodate the sensitivities of neighbouring countries," he noted.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.  
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/67073>