

Dr M issues six-page open letter on scrapped bridge

KUALA LUMPUR: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has issued a six-page open letter to explain why he thought the scenic bridge project to replace the Johor Causeway should have gone ahead unilaterally.

The letter also had an appendix of 13 pages of correspondence between the former prime minister and Singapore leaders Lee Kuan Yew and Goh

According to an aide of Dr Mahathir, the open letter was sent to politicians and community leaders who wanted to hear his exact position on the matter.

He said the letters were sent out shortly before Dr Mahathir went for holiday in Europe last week. He is expected back in Kuala Lumpur next week.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir's for-

mer political secretary Matthias Chang questioned how Malaysia's negotiating team had been outflanked by Singapore on the bridge issue.

He alleged Malaysia was not prepared for the talk and had been outmanoeuvred by the Singaporeans.

"Malaysia did not have a comprehensive strategy in dealing with Singapore. Malaysia has not learned from past expe-

hence in her dealings with Singapore," he added.

He said the negotiations on the issue had been going on for more than 10 years.

"Time after time, what was deemed agreed between the two countries was overturned subsequently. Singapore seems to have the right and privilege to agree and then disagree," he added.

Chang said that in two letters,

dated Sept 8, 2001 and April 11, 2002, from Lee and Goh respectively, both leaders had indicated their agreement to having the bridge and had no objections to it being built.

He said Malaysia should not have given way to the Singapore demand but instead pursue the matter for international arbitration or refer the issue to the International Court of Justice for resolution.

On Monday, ambassador-at-large Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, who has been directed by the Government to explain the bridge issue, said the decision to scrap the project was the best option, given the strong public sentiment on the issue.

For the full text of Dr Mahathir and Ahmad Fuzi's statements on the issue, please see www.thestar.com.my