

Dr M 'wrong on sand and airspace issues'

TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad got it wrong when he said Malaysia offered to sell sand to Singapore and to allow the republic to use Malaysian airspace, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

"It was Singapore, and not Malaysia, which first asked to re-allow the sale of sand and the use of Malaysian airspace," he said in a written reply to Lim Kit Siang (DAP - Ipoh

Timur), Salahuddin Ayub (PAS - Kubang Kerian) and Abdul Fatah Harun (PAS - Rantau Panjang).

"Both issues came about as political quid pro quo based on mutual interest for Singapore to agree to the new bridge to replace the Johor Causeway."

He said the air space issue had been discussed during negotiations between 1998 and 2002.

"Tun (Dr Mahathir) was the one who offered it as one of the issues for trade-off during the package negotiations," he said.

He said Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, during a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on March 1 last year, repeated Singapore's request to use Malaysian air space and the sand issue.

On sand, Syed Hamid said the Government had considered Singapore's request after taking into account that Malaysia had sold sand to Singapore for a long time under Dr Mahathir's administration.

"Sand is still being sold to Singapore even now, but that is silica sand. However, compared to sand sold during Tun's time we have now imposed stricter conditions," he said.