

PM: Future talks will depend on situation

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KUALA LUMPUR: Negotiations in the future between Malaysia and Singapore on a bridge to replace the Causeway will be contingent on prevailing conditions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said new circumstances would require new considerations and these would determine the nature of such talks.

"I don't want to talk about later," he said when asked if negotiations would open later between the neighbouring countries regarding the bridge, plans for which have now been scrapped.

Abdullah, however, went on to say that the dynamic relationship



between Malaysia and Singapore would bring about new needs that would require new ways of thinking.

"Any action taken will be in accordance with the situation at that time," he said, adding that for now, the requirement for a new bridge need not be fulfilled.

The Cabinet decided on

Wednesday to scrap plans to build a new bridge across the Johor Strait to replace the Causeway, in deference to public sentiment.

Singapore's condition that Malaysia supply the republic with sand and allow its jet-fighters the use of Johor airspace was met with much unhappiness from Malaysians.

Speaking after officiating the "Smart Spending Campaign" at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday, the Prime Minister said the decision was the best approach to stop the issue, which had been going on for seven years, from carrying on.

"People can understand what we are doing," he said, adding that the relationship between Malaysia and Singapore would go on

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as usual.

Abdullah also said the nearly-completed RM700 million Customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) complex in Bukit Chagar would not be "a waste".

"The complex will not be a white elephant," he said, adding that it would be fully utilised as it would replace the current CIQ complex at the Causeway.

He added that the new CIQ complex was much bigger and this would ease traffic congestion and provide faster service.

"I believe the traffic flow will be a lot smoother in the new CIQ."

Abdullah also said that if the State Government wanted to renovate or change the old CIQ building to meet new needs, it was free to do so.