

# 'Fuzi's just RAMBLING'

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** No one is being spared Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's venom these days — not even Tan Sri Fuzi Abdul-Razak, the seasoned, mild-mannered and respected diplomat.

In the latest instalment of his attack on the Government for scrapping the bridge to replace the Causeway, the former prime minister took issue with Fuzi's comprehensive defence of that decision on April 25.

He called the explanation rambling and unconvincing.

"Tan Sri Fuzi's rambling explanation serves only to convince that the Government's priority and intention is to sell sand to Singapore. If it is not allowed to do so, then Malaysia will not get its bridge," said Dr Mahathir in a 16-point statement.

The ambassador-at-large had said that scrapping the bridge was the best option given the

strong opposition to Malaysia selling sand to the republic and allowing the use of Malaysian airspace by Singapore's air force.

The first option was to proceed with negotiations to reach a deal with mutual benefits.

Based on Singapore's immediate needs, Fuzi said, Malaysia would have had to lift the ban on the export of sand and reinstate the use of Malaysian airspace.

But public opinion in Malaysia indicated these concessions were seen as giving away too much in exchange for a new bridge.

The second option was to proceed with a scenic half-bridge that would join Singapore's half of the 80-year-old Causeway. But this required getting Singapore's approval to relocate water pipelines, which could lead to a request for a balance of benefits.

Option three was to unilaterally build a half-bridge that could

eventually be linked to Singapore. But this would have resulted in endless political bickering and legal wrangle.

The fourth option — not to proceed with a new bridge — was the Government's best choice after much deliberation.

Dr Mahathir said his reading of the Wayleave Agreement signed between both countries showed that there was no specific provision for Singapore's approval before relocating the Public Utilities Board water pipelines.

He noted that there had been many alterations to the Causeway and pipelines in the past without any objection from Singapore or Malaysia.

He also called attention to a letter from former Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that he had no objections if Malaysia intended to replace its side of the Causeway with a bridge.

"Thus a unilateral decision became bilateral when Singapore acceded and accepted. Any change must similarly be agreed to by both sides," he said.

Fuzi had put Goh's statement in its proper context. He noted that Goh had written a subsequent letter to withdraw that concession after Dr Mahathir signalled intention to call off talks on the package of issues and concentrate on settling the niggling question of water supply.

Goh wrote: "With the termination of the package negotiations, the underlying basis for the statements in the letter of April 11, 2002 no longer exists."

Dr Mahathir said when Singapore stated that it wanted sand and airspace, it was adding conditions to what had been decided by him and Goh.

Malaysia should have rejected the new conditions. He argued

that by aborting the bridge plan, Malaysia had tacitly agreed to Singapore unilaterally changing what had been decided.

If Malaysia was uncertain of its right, the proper thing would have been to refer the matter to arbitration or take the issue to court.

"It gave in supposedly because the Malaysian legal authorities believe Singapore is in the right. It would be interesting to read the grounds for the Attorney-General to conclude that Singapore has what amounts to extra-territorial rights and Malaysia has no sovereign right within its own territorial waters."

Dr Mahathir did not believe Singapore would refuse to allow the half-bridge to connect with its side of the Causeway. "That would constitute an unfriendly act. It would be tantamount to Singapore cutting its nose to spite its face."

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Dr Mahathir

