

'No need for referendum on project cancellation'

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KUALA LUMPUR: There was no referendum when the Government decided to build a bridge across the Johor Strait. So there shouldn't be any reason to have one now to scrap the bridge.

Government Backbenchers Club chairman Datuk Shahrir Samad said this yesterday in commenting on a suggestion by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that there should be a referendum to get Johor residents' views on the decision to cancel the bridge project.

Shahrir said it was also the same Cabinet that decided to build the bridge and later reversed the decision.

"When the idea was mooted, the majority of current Cabinet members agreed to build the bridge," he said.

He added Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting were the ministers who agreed with Dr Mahathir on building the bridge.

"Although there is now a different Prime Minister, the same ministers agreed to scrap the plan to build the bridge," he said.

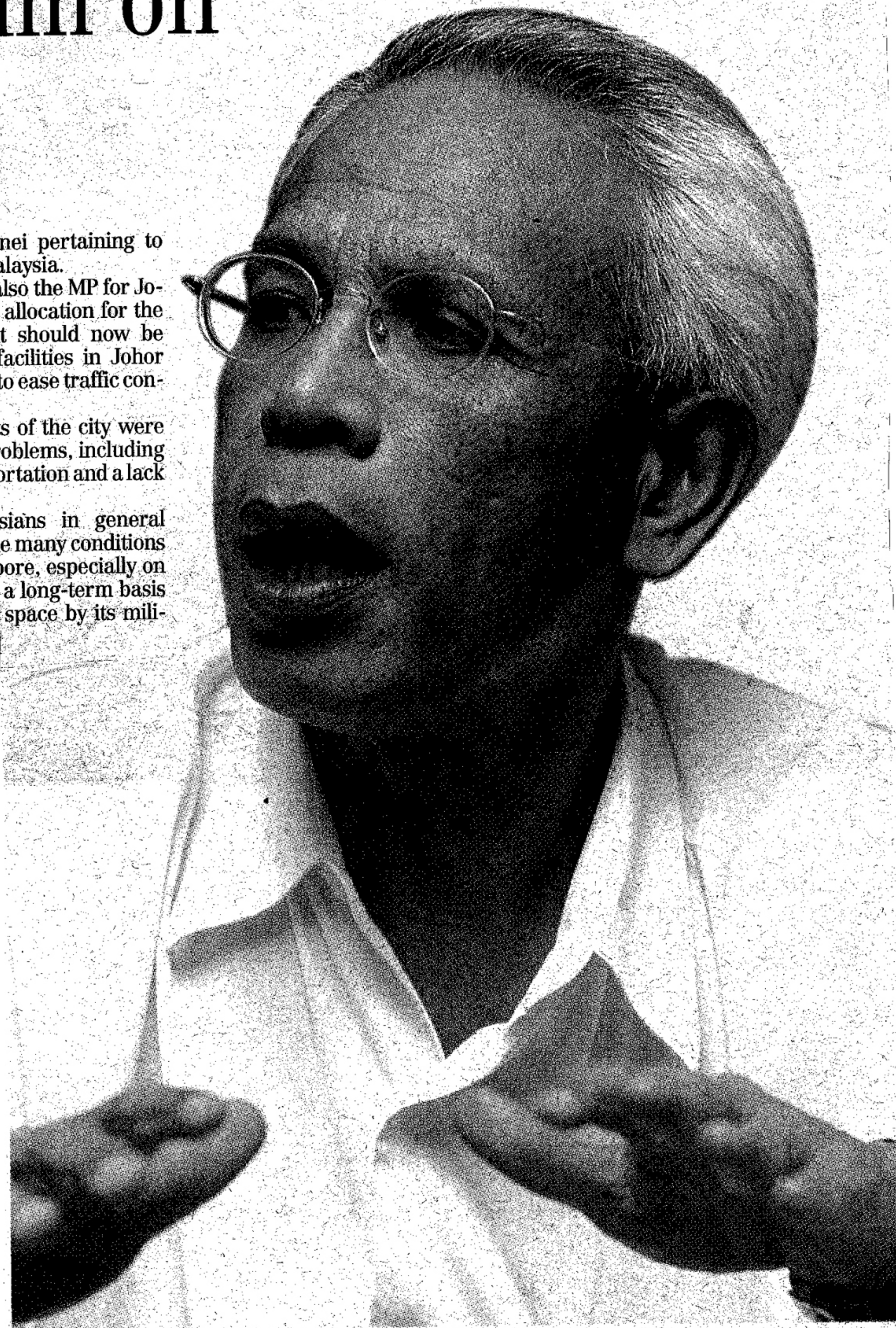
The last official referendum in the country was in 1962 to determine the views of residents in Sabah,

Sarawak and Brunei pertaining to the formation of Malaysia.

Shahrir, who is also the MP for Johor Baru, said the allocation for the abandoned project should now be used to upgrade facilities in Johor Baru, particularly to ease traffic congestion.

He said residents of the city were facing a myriad problems, including poor public transportation and a lack of housing.

He said Malaysians in general could not accept the many conditions imposed by Singapore, especially on supplying sand on a long-term basis and the use of air space by its military.



Shahrir says the allocation for the abandoned project should now be used to upgrade transportation facilities in Johor Baru.