

# 'Many bridges will be built'

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## Abdullah believes there will be better links with Singapore in the future

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi believes that in the future there will be many bridges linking Johor and Singapore.

"One day, there will be many bridges like there are in New York, Manhattan and even in Korea.

(There are 2,027 bridges in New York City and 27 in Seoul over the River Han.)

"So while there may be differences in our approach, the Straits (of Johor) will not be an obstacle," Abdullah, who is Umno president, told reporters yesterday after the party's 61st anniversary celebrations.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had said that as a Johorean he personally would like to see the bridge built because the Causeway was "out of date" and "not in tune with the times."

Last year, Malaysia scrapped plans to build a crooked "scenic" bridge to replace the 80-year-old Causeway that links the two countries, citing potential legal problems as it believed Singapore might not go along with the project.

Abdullah is due to meet Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for bilateral talks in Langkawi on Monday.

Asked whether he would raise the bridge issue with Lee, Abdullah said: "I am keeping an open mind."

Earlier, Abdullah became emotional when he watched a video of the Malay struggle from pre-inde-



**Meeting the president:** Umno veterans Datuk Zaid Sirat and Napsiah Abdullah greeting Abdullah before the Umno Veterans Council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

pendence to the present.

Wiping a tear away, he said he could recollect how the Malays back then had such a strong will that they were willing to sacrifice everything for the betterment of their people and the country.

"I was not so young as to forget or old enough to participate back then.

But I saw and listened to our fighters (*pejuang*) - my father, my grandfather and their friends were all fighters.

"My mother pawned her gold bangles (to finance part of the struggle) and redeemed them later when there was money, then pawned them again and redeemed them

again over and over.

"She told me she managed to redeem all the jewellery after independence," he said, adding that Tunku Abdul Rahman, too, made sacrifices and sold hectares of his land to fund the struggle.

He told members at a hall in PWTC that back then travelling to

Kuala Lumpur was not easy because the roads were bad and that people used all sorts of modes of transport to get here.

Abdullah also said that since 1961 he had never missed attending the Umno general assembly - first as an observer, then as a government officer preparing information for the leader to answer issues raised during the debates, later as a delegate and then as an elected leader.

"I remember that in the past there was the family spirit in the party. We do not hear that anymore these days," he said.

He noted that in the past, leaders like Tun Sardon Jubir would call up other leaders like Tun Ghafar Baba and offer to give way if the latter wanted a particular post in the party.

"There was give and take. We do not want fighting as it is not good for the party," he said.

Abdullah also said party members should not make it a culture to get allowances each time they did something for the party.

He said it was understandable that some members from out of town needed to be reimbursed for their transport expenses because they could not afford it.

"But they cannot ask for money for helping to put up posters for the party. That should not be tolerated," he added.

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