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PRIME NEWS

# Dr M debates new bridge plan

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LINK: 'Remove Causeway if Friendship Bridge is built'

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**F**ORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the current Causeway linking Malaysia and Singapore should be removed if plans to build a Friendship Bridge were to go ahead.

He said there was no longer any need for a Causeway if the bridge was built.

"The Causeway prevents water from flowing underneath and it is dirty... it prevents people from moving around. There is big traffic jam in Johor Baru as no bridge is built," he said, here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir hoped that the Friendship Bridge would not be built elsewhere as it would not resolve the traffic situation.

"The Causeway should be removed... otherwise no Friendship (Bridge)."

The former premier expressed disappointment over the cancellation of the project to build a 'Crooked Bridge' on the Malaysian side of the Johor Straits, linking to the Causeway, on the Singapore side.

"I am very disappointed as it was promised to me (that) it would be built, but suddenly, it did not materialise," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Crooked Bridge should have been built as the Johor Causeway prohibited the east-west flow of water which could be utilised for communication.

The Friendship Bridge was proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at a joint press conference with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong after the annual Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat in Putrajaya on April 7.

In **Johor Baru**, the business community ex-

pressed their hope for the Friendship Bridge to be built in a strategic location such as Stulang Laut here.

Johor Baru Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Loh Liam Hiang said the idea of a Friendship Bridge was to make life easier for residents on both sides of the Johor Straits by providing them with hassle-free access. He added that the bridge should not be too long as it would incur higher costs.

"We could build more than one as long as there are suitable sites. The first bridge should be located near Stulang Laut, as it is linked to many parts of the state through the Eastern Dispersal Link (EDL). I hope it will reduce travelling time significantly. At present, it takes about 90 minutes to two hours for clearance during peak hours."

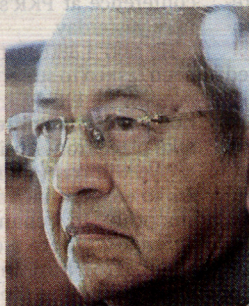
Loh proposed that the bridge's construction be privatised like in many countries, as this will alleviate the government's financial burden.

Johor Indian Businessmen Association president P. Sivakumar concurred that Stulang Laut was the best site for the bridge, adding that privatisation would help ensure the project would be executed promptly.

He said Stulang Laut was well-linked to the city via the Inner Ring Road and the EDL.

State Public Works, Rural and Regional Development Committee chairman Datuk Hasni Mohammad was recently quoted as saying that the new bridge will not replace the Causeway but complement it.

Hasni said the state government will consider several variables such as traffic flow, plus maximising the use of the current Customs, Immigration and Quarantine complex at Sultan Iskandar Building, before deciding on its location.



Former prime minister **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad** says the Friendship Bridge should replace the Causeway