

Causeway finally reopens

Land crossings allowed again after 20-month closure

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SINGAPORE: The Johor-Singapore Causeway, one of the busiest border crossings in the world, has officially reopened with the launch of the land Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL-Land).

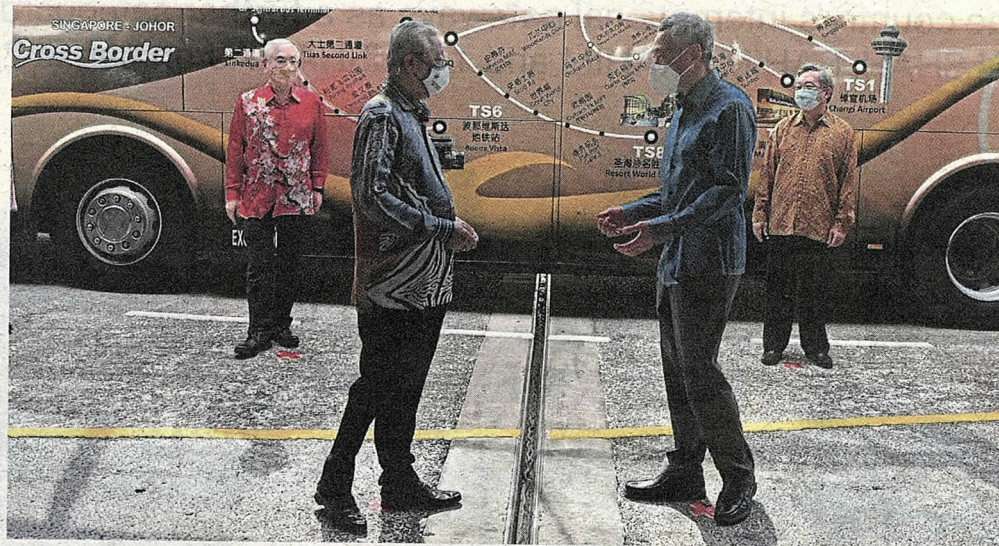
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong were at the Woodlands checkpoint to jointly launch the scheme yesterday, reports Bernama.

The 97-year-old Causeway, also known as Tambak Johor, was closed to the usual 400,000-odd daily travellers since mid-March 2020 to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Ismail Sabri crossed the 1km bridge to enter the Singaporean side where he and his delegation were welcomed by Lee, who was accompanied by four Cabinet ministers.

Accompanying Ismail Sabri were Senior Minister and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Hasni Mohammad.

With Lee were Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean, Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Trade and Industry



Travel arrangement: Ismail Sabri (second from left) and Lee officially launching the VTL-Land at the Woodlands checkpoint. Looking on is Dr Wee (left). – Bernama

Minister Gan Kim Yong and Transport Minister and Minister for Trade Relations S. Iswaran.

In announcing the VTL-Land scheme on Nov 24, Malaysia said the initial stage would be limited to bus transportation with a daily quota not exceeding 1,500 travellers.

Other modes of land transportation will be included in stages with the daily quota of travellers to be increased on a weekly basis.

The initiative is to facilitate quarantine-free, seamless cross-border

movement integrating health protocols, security and immigration clearance.

The Singapore-bound designated VTL-Land bus services will use Larkin Sentral Bus Terminal as the boarding and disembarkation point in Malaysia, with Queen Street Terminal as the boarding and disembarkation point in Singapore.

Travellers allowed to take part in this scheme are Malaysian and Singaporean citizens and permanent residents as well as holders of

Malaysia and Singapore Long-Term Pass.

The launch of the VTL-Land coincided with the VTL-Air between Changi Airport and Kuala Lumpur International Airport as announced on Nov 8.

Malaysia and Singapore have achieved more than 95% vaccination rate of the adult population.

This has offered opportunities for both countries to reopen the land border in a gradual, safe, systematic and sustainable manner.