

**Dr M questions undersea tunnel to Singapore**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**January 08, 2012**  
**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has questioned whether an undersea tunnel proposed as a third link to Singapore is the best solution for growing traffic across the Tebrau Straits.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong confirmed earlier this week that both countries are studying the idea first mooted in November.

The former prime minister, who has continued to lobby for his 'Crooked Bridge' to replace the Causeway, said in a blog posting yesterday two tunnels might be required as the "bridge that will not be built now (was) planned to have eight lanes."

Dr Mahathir (picture) said the tunnel would have to begin far inland to ensure a gentle gradient for heavy vehicles especially if the Singapore MRT is to use it as well.

"Trains need even more gentle slopes. So the length might be more than eight kilometres.

"Can Malaysia afford the cost of half this project, assuming the other half will be borne by Singapore? The project will cost billions and will take very many years to complete," he wrote.

Dr Mahathir also said the Causeway should be demolished if the undersea tunnel is built as both Singapore and Malaysia will benefit from the removal of the 88-year-old highway.

"When completed, I hope the Causeway and the railway line will be removed. We will not need them anymore.

"Then water will flow east west and vice-versa. And small boats will be able to use the Tebrau Straits without having to go around south of Singapore," he wrote.

Just last month, Johor Umno called on the federal government to revive the 'Crooked Bridge' which Dr Mahathir has pushed hard for since the 1990s.

Dr Mahathir had also pressured Johor Umno to revive the idea in February last year but Najib, who is keen to repair bilateral ties with the island republic, has been reluctant to discuss the proposal which was received frostily by Singapore's government when first mooted.

The plan to tear down the Malaysian half of the Causeway and replace it with a curving bridge high enough for shipping traffic to pass beneath was ditched by Dr Mahathir's successor, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir, who still wields significant influence over Umno despite stepping down in 2003, made his ire towards Abdullah very public and has continued to harangue Najib over the construction of the bridge.

But the prime minister had instead preferred to discuss other potential solutions such as a third bridge with Malaysia's southern neighbour. He also successfully resolved the long-standing issue of Malayan Railway land in Singapore last year.

The Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) tasked with turning south Johor into a thriving economic hub, mooted the undersea tunnel as a third link between Malaysia and Singapore in November.

The Causeway, which is about 1.056km long, was completed in 1923 and links Johor Baru to Woodlands on the other side of the Straits of Johor. Between 80,000 and 100,000 vehicles use it daily.

The proposal to build a bridge to replace the 88-year-old Causeway was justified by Dr Mahathir as a means to ease traffic congestion between Johor Baru and Singapore and facilitate the free flow of water in the Tebrau Straits in addition to allowing ships heading to East Asia to bypass Singapore.

But the Najib administration continues to show no intention of reviving the crooked bridge project proposed by Dr Mahathir to replace the Causeway, according to Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz.

Umno-linked Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB) is also set to impose a toll on vehicles crossing the Causeway in both directions after completing its Eastern Dispersal Link (EDL) that brings traffic from the border to the North-South Highway

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright© 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/dr-m-questions-undersea-tunnel-to-singapore/>