

Dr M sends open

letter on bridge

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has sent a lengthy open letter addressing the half-bridge project to all MPs and Umno division leaders.

His aide Sufi Yusuf confirmed yesterday a few hundred letters were sent out by mail after Mahathir left for the United Kingdom on April 17.

However, checks with some MPs yesterday showed they had yet to get the seven-page letter written in Bahasa Malaysia, which contained five appendices which are letters from the Singapore government.

These letters were lifted from the book *Water Talk? If Only It Could* published by the Singapore government, Sufi said.

A copy of the letter has been uploaded in a pro-Umno website *kmu.net.my* (KMU is the acronym for Kelab Maya Umno).

The letter basically expanded on Mahathir's earlier press statement that the government had failed to defend the nation's sovereignty in dropping the bridge project.

Early this month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had scrapped the project, citing negative public sentiments over Singapore's demand for the sale of sand and the use of airspace. He also said there were legal implications involving the building of the half-bridge.

Sufi said Mahathir sent out the letters as he felt the MPs and Umno grassroots leaders did not fully understand the issue. The letter was not given to the press.

On Monday evening, Foreign Ministry Ambassador-at-Large Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak issued a 3,800-word statement explaining the behind-the-scenes negotiations on the bridge.

Yesterday, Matthias

Chang, Mahathir's former political secretary, again called a press conference to say that Malaysia was incompetent in dealings with Singapore.

With him was lawyer Zainur Zakaria, former counsel of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Asked why he was there, Zainur said: "I am here because it is a matter of interest. I want to know what the government does, since it claims that it is my (the rakyat's) decision."

Chang said Ahmad Fuzi's statement "is clear evidence that Malaysia was incompetent in particular and was repeatedly outflanked and outmanoeuvred by the Singapore negotiation team.

"It did not, at any point, contradict what I said (on April 18) and confirmed every particular and documents that I cited.

"And having cited these documents, (it) confirms my stand that we are no longer bound by the Official Secrets Act (OSA) because Wisma Putra has brought these documents into the public domain.

"The only new document cited by Ahmad Fuzi was the Diplomatic Note dated Nov 29, 2004. However, let it be said here and now as a preliminary point of rebuttal - this letter does not change the main thrust of my criticism that we were ill-prepared and ill-

advised in Malaysia's negotiations with Singapore."

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