

Bridge plan not totally cast aside, says Najib

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JOHOR BARU: The Cabinet has never totally rejected the idea of replacing the Causeway with a bridge, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

He said the controversial project was only scrapped because Singapore had objected to it.

"The Cabinet is not totally averse to the idea," he said after closing the two-day Johor Umno Convention here.

"The obstacle lies in our negotiations with Singapore."

On Sunday, the Sultan of Johor had called for the 83-year-old Causeway to be demolished, saying it was un-

dermining the state's economy and was a vestige of colonialism.

Najib said: "We respect the Sultan's views and the people of Johor's feelings on the bridge issue."

He said as Malaysia was bound by international conventions and treaties, it could not unilaterally proceed with the bridge to replace the Causeway.

Asked if the bridge project would be revived, he replied: "I cannot predict the future."

Najib said that Malaysia would have gone ahead and completed work on the bridge if Singapore had not

raised objections and demanded trade-offs, such as the supply of sand and the use of Malaysian airspace for its jet-fighters.

"When we wanted to build a straight bridge, we acceded to Singapore's demand in the spirit of political goodwill between both countries.

"But when we opted to build a scenic bridge instead, Singapore threatened to invoke international laws to stop construction.

"Negotiations came to a dead end. It was then that the Cabinet decided that it was better to scrap the bridge project."