

At a glance



BRIDGE PLANS: An artist impression of the scenic bridge that was supposed to have replaced the Malaysian half of the Causeway.

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Setting the record straight

THE Government has declassified several relevant confidential documents and extracts thereof to allow Malaysians to understand why it has reached the decision to abort the bridge project to replace the Johor Causeway. And in doing so, it has put the record straight on a string of allegations raised by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, namely that:

- THE Singapore government accepted Malaysia's proposal to build a crooked bridge;
- THE bridge was not part of the package of outstanding bilateral issues;
- MALAYSIA is a "half-past-six country with no guts" by not going ahead with the crooked bridge project; and
- MALAYSIA put the issues of selling sand and allowing Singapore's air force to

use its airspace on the negotiating table. This is only the second time in recent history that information protected by the Official Secrets Act has been declassified and approved for public consumption - an indication of the Government's seriousness in wanting the people who voted it into power to have the full facts, so that they can

On the crooked bridge:
1. Dr Mahathir: Singapore accepted Malaysia's proposal to build a crooked bridge to replace the Malaysian side of the Johor Causeway.
The Government says: On Oct 14, 2002, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong agreed to discontinue discussions on the outstanding bilateral issues as a package and stated that its earlier agreement to the bridge project was now not applicable.

On Aug 24, 2000, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew wrote to Special Functions Minister and Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin saying all correspondence would be treated as Without Prejudice and that there was no agreement until all points were agreed and signed by the two PMs.

2. Dr Mahathir: That the bridge was not part of the package of bilateral issues.

The Government says: At first, the outstanding package of issues only covered four areas - water, Central Provident Fund, airspace and the relocation of KTM's CIQ complex in Singapore. Dr Mahathir inserted the bridge project into the package in a letter to Lee on March 4, 2002.

On the use of airspace and sale of sand

Dr Mahathir: The present Government offered its airspace and sand to Singapore.

The Government says: The issue of allowing use of Malaysian airspace has been on the negotiating table between 1998 and 2002. Dr Mahathir himself inserted this issue in a

letter to Lee on March 4, 2002. With the de-packaging of the bilateral issues, the proposal made by Dr Mahathir is no longer relevant.

The republic did not see the need for a bridge to replace the Causeway. It wanted something in return for agreeing to the bridge deal and requested for sand and the use of airspace.

A half-past-six country with no guts

Dr Mahathir: Malaysia is a "half-past-six country with no guts" for calling off the bridge project.

The Government says: A crooked bridge is not a legacy to leave for future Malaysians. The bridge project was aborted after studying the Wayleave Agreements, the Johor-Singapore Water Agreements 1961 and 1962, the Separation Agreement 1965 and taking into consideration advice by the Attorney General's Chambers.

Malaysia cannot take unilateral action without taking into consideration international-law principles and requirements, and without taking into account the rights and interests of its neighbouring states.

The half bridge would have been left in a limbo with no commitment from Singapore. Running the government is not about scoring points or engaging in brinkmanship. It is about weighing the pros and cons and reaching a decision that is good for Malaysia.

It was a political decision, based on the sentiments, sovereignty and integrity of the people of Malaysia.