

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SECOND CROSSING

TANJUNG KUPANG, JOHOR DARUL TAKZIM, 18 APRIL 1998

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address this gathering here on the official opening of the Malaysia - Singapore Second Crossing. The opening of this bridge marks yet another milestone in strengthening the friendly relationship between Malaysia and Singapore.

2. The basis for the close ties between our countries was laid about seventy-eight years ago i.e. on 24 April 1920 when the foundation stone for the first link or Johor Causeway connecting the Island of Singapore to the then Malaya was laid. The reason for the construction of the Johor Causeway, which was completed in 1924, was to facilitate commerce and administration of the two territories by the colonial Government. The rapid economic development enjoyed by both Malaysia and Singapore since independence has made the causeway inadequate to serve the heavy traffic that has grown.

3. It was because of this that discussions were held by Malaysian and Singapore officials in early 1989 on the possibility of constructing a second bridge. The discussions were successfully concluded and, on 22 March 1994, the Inter-Government Agreement for the Design and Construction of the Second Bridge, now known as the Second Link, was signed.

4. What we are seeing before us here today is the culmination of the efforts of both countries working together to complete the construction of the Second Crossing. Within ASEAN, Singapore ranks as Malaysia's leading trading partner. This 2nd link will certainly enhance that partnership. I am confident that it will play a pivotal role in facilitating economic and infrastructure development of both Singapore and Malaysia. Indeed, I can say that this second crossing will literally act as the bridge to carry our two countries into the 21st century.

5. This new bridge can be seen as a triumph for ASEAN as it demonstrates to all of us the success of two of its members in working towards regional cooperation. This bridge which took three years to complete and was opened to traffic since the 2nd of January this year stands before us a monument to the skill, patience and cooperation of those responsible for its construction. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the officials of Malaysia and Singapore who have worked closely together. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Lim Hng Kiang, the Minister of National Development, Singapore and Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu, the Minister of Works, Malaysia, who as the ministers responsible for the Second Crossing have taken great personal interest in ensuring the success of this joint undertaking.

6. The Second Crossing is a two-kilometre long high level box-girder bridge linking Tanjung Kupang in South- West Johor to Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim in Tuas, Singapore. On the Malaysian side the bridge will be connected to the Second Crossing Expressway by a 36.5 km dual three lane carriageway, which is in turn connected to the existing North-South Expressway and Senai Airport. Another new expressway called the Perling Expressway, which is an 8.5 km dual two lane

carriageway, will provide the link from the bridge to Johor Bahru and to the port and industrial areas of Pasir Gudang.

7. Travelling time by road will be shortened and transport operating costs will be significantly reduced as traffic congestion on the existing causeway and within the city of Johor Bahru is relieved by the diversion of most long distance and heavy cargo traffic to this new bridge.

8. For Malaysia, the Second Crossing will provide new and important links in the national and regional highway system and will enable it to act as a catalyst in the development of an area which is very close to the consumer market and supporting facilities of Singapore. It will also help to open up new growth areas around Johor Bahru and towns further north and in the process will facilitate the relocation of selected industries within the region.

9. Despite the recent ' hiccup' in the relations between Singapore and Malaysia, I am very heartened to note that the economic turmoil that is affecting the ASEAN region has, in fact, brought us closer together to try and resolve the problems besetting us. In addition, frequent consultations and discussions have made us more aware of the sensitivities and the problems that we face. Of more importance is the fact that it has made us more aware of the strength that both possess and how these can be harnessed for the benefit of our peoples. I wish therefore to reiterate here that Malaysia values its links with Singapore and has always regarded Singapore and Singaporeans as friends. I therefore look forward with great optimism and confidence to even closer cooperation between us.

10. To Mr. Goh Chok Tong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, I would also like to convey my thanks for being present here and in order to enable us to jointly officiate the opening of this bridge.

11. To Mr. Lim Hng Kiang, the Minister of National Development and other guests from Singapore, I , on behalf of my colleagues from Malaysia, would also like to convey my thanks for your presence here to witness the official opening of the Second Crossing.