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**TOP STORIES**



## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHERN ISLANDS

### Roads to link Sentosa to St John's Island?

By Teh Jen Lee

BUMPED off a bumboat headed for St John's? Fret not.

One day you could be taking a scenic drive from Orchard Road all the way to St John's and Lazarus islands south of Singapore.

Or walking to St John's from Sentosa.

With a land link, visitors could well drive from the city to the islands, via Sentosa, in about 30 minutes.

It's a possibility being considered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) as part of a move to turn the Southern Islands into a world-class holiday resort, its spokesman told The New Paper.

**The spokesman said: 'A transport link is one of the considerations we will look at as we study the development of a world-class resort on the Southern Islands.'**

If the project gains momentum, industry experts foresee a road link between Sentosa and the Southern Islands becoming a reality in just three to five years.

Under the ambitious tourism plan disclosed by Trade and Industry Minister George Yeo in Parliament earlier this month, this chain of islands could be turned into a glamorous resort to attract international jet-setters.

It will have beaches, hotels, marinas, sports complexes, convention centres, health spas, retail shops, restaurants, theme attractions, and maybe even a casino.

BG Yeo had mentioned Dubai's Palm Resort and the Bahamas' Atlantis when he talked of what the new resort might look like.

The development would cover 500 ha, which would make it about 10 times the size of the Botanic Gardens.

A local reclamation expert, who has worked on the Southern Islands project, told The New Paper that this can be done in 2 1/2 to three years, if material such as sand is available.

Before reclamation, the original size of the Southern Islands, consisting of the two Sisters Islands, St John's Island, Lazarus Island, Pulau Seringat, Kusu, and Pulau Tekukor, was 108 ha.

Some reclamation has been done since 2000 because of an earlier 'resort-lifestyle' plan that would cost \$280 million. (See report at next page.)

But an MTI spokesman said that with the new development, the plans for the Southern Islands will be 'reviewed'.

We contacted Mr Bernard Spoerry, who conceptualised the first Southern Islands plan, to ask what the new plans could mean.

The French architect, who has been a consultant of the Singapore Tourism Board since 1990, said: 'The figure of 500 ha is only consistent with the extension of the Sentosa land mass all the way to the Southern Islands.'

So the net effect of the reclamation could well be a road from Sentosa to the islands.

Or it could be a causeway, like the \$238-million one linking the mainland and Jurong Island, a 3,200-ha industrial complex formed by the reclamation of seven islands.

Mr Spoerry said the idea of linking Sentosa and the Southern

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Islands was discussed at length in the mid-90s.

However, there was concern that this would reduce tidal flow of water around Singapore harbour.

He said: 'The water quality is fully dependant on the flushing effect of tidal currents passing between Sentosa and Southern Islands. Without it, the water would just stagnate.'

The MTI spokesman told The New Paper that the study of its plans will take into consideration the various issues raised, including the marine environment and nature conservation.

This was done in 1997, when the Housing Board engaged the National University of Singapore to carry out an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the neighbouring waters and islands.

**She said: 'The EIA covered water quality and the coral reef community in these areas. If further reclamation is required, an EIA will be carried out before work commences.'**

She noted that the developments on the Southern Islands will make Singapore a more vibrant and attractive place, and contribute to the tourism industry and economic growth.

The online Government consultation portal is soliciting feedback for the project until Apr 16.

Comments can be submitted through this website  
<http://app.feedback.gov.sg/asp/dis/dis00.asp>.

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### Various plans for Southern Islands

BEFORE BG George Yeo's announcement, there had been various plans for the islands.

The first were conceived in 1989, with the Government agreeing to fund the project in 1996. However, the development was delayed.

In 1999, the Urban Redevelopment Authority's plan was to use reclaimed land for a marine village resort.

In 2000, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) proposed converting the islands into an Asian version of Capri, an idyllic resort off the west coast of Italy.

The islands of St John's, Lazarus and Pulau Seringat would be linked through land reclamation and the building of two causeways.

The three islands total 88 ha, with 34 ha of reclaimed land to be added.

While 80 per cent of the forests would be retained, there would also be a five-star 290-room hilltop hotel, a three-star 170-room beachfront hotel, 70 waterfront homes and 1,700 units of housing.

Costing \$280 million, it would bring in \$460 million in land sales and up to \$600 million in construction business, said STB.

Based on 1999 tourism figures, STB had anticipated that 5 per cent of the 7 million visitors to Singapore would visit the islands.

Nearly seven out of 10 would spend one or two nights there.

The islands were also touted as a nature park for Singaporean day-trippers a year later.

In 2001, STB also said eco-tourism capitalising on the species-rich forests and coral reefs would take priority, with resort development following only when the economy improved.

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