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PENSYARAH STML KUPAS IMPLIKASI LAND BRIDGE THAILAND TERHADAP MALAYSIA DALAM CILTM PULSE



Professional REFLECTION

ECONOMICS OPINION
RETHINKING THAILAND'S LAND BRIDGE AND WHAT IT REALLY MEANS FOR MALAYSIA

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Short Biographical:

Dr. Mohd Azril Ismail is an Associate Professor at the School of Technology and Logistics, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). He is a Chartered Member of the Institute of Logistics and Transportation. In 2010, he earned his Ph.D. in Maritime Safety & Health from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Dr. Mohd Azril began his career as a System Analyst with the Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya, Selangor. He joined Universiti Utara Malaysia as an academician in June 2006.

Dr. Mohd Azril's research has been widely published and presented at numerous international conferences and journals, including the International Journal of Management, Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization, Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession, Safety Science, International Journal of Supply Chain Management, Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Asian Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences, Journal of Advanced Research in Business and Management Studies, and Journal of Advanced Management Science.

Short Biographical:

Ts. Dr. Abdul Khabir Rahmat, CMILT is a senior lecturer and the Head of Postgraduate Studies at the Malaysia Institute of Transport (MITRANS), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). He holds a PhD in Transport and Logistics from UiTM, with research focusing on logistics and transport management, sustainable supply chains, road safety, service quality, and emerging technologies in transportation. He previously served as the Coordinator of the Executive Diploma in Transport Management and Enforcement, a collaborative programme between UiTM and the Road Transport Department Malaysia.

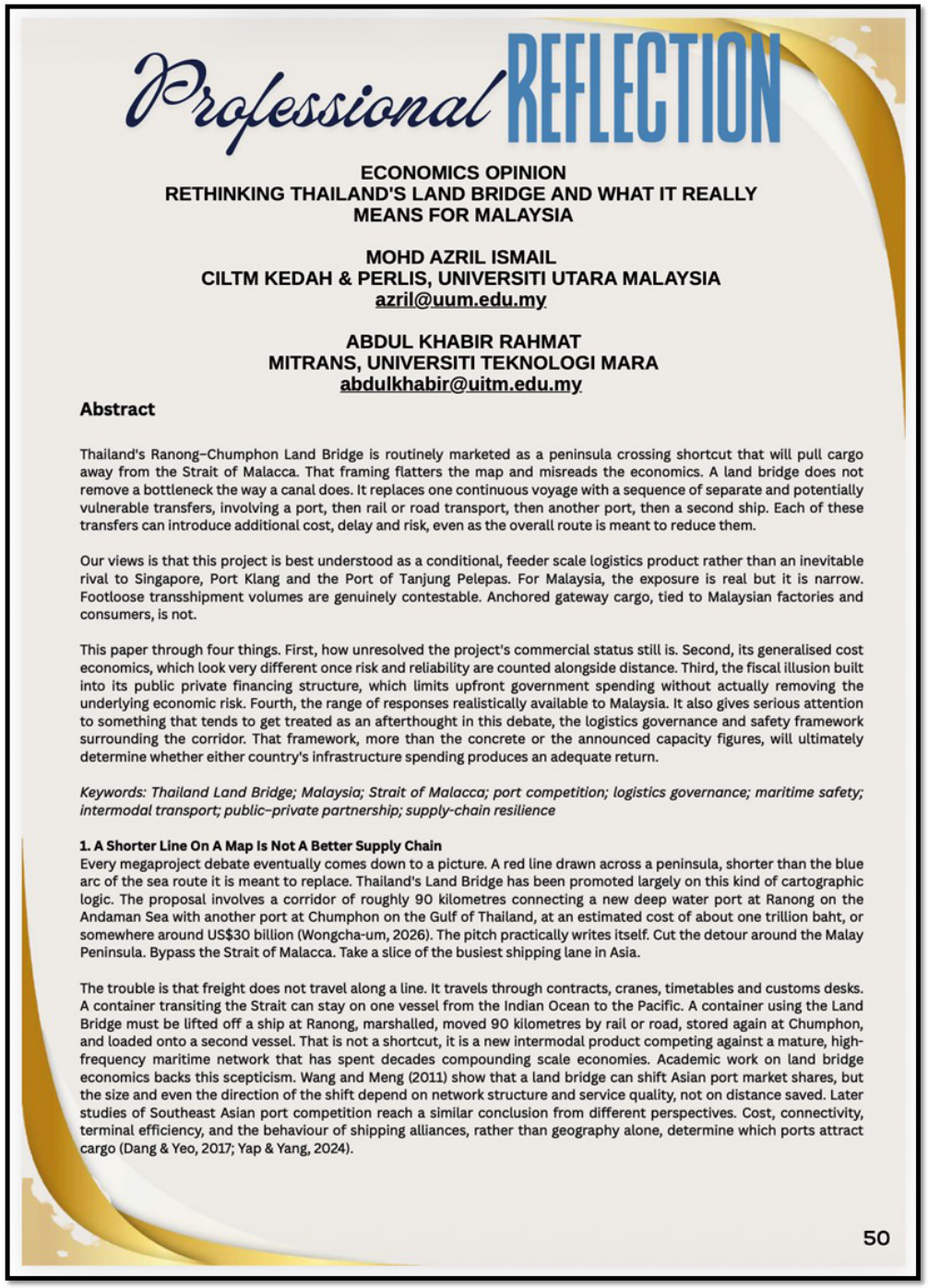
Dr. Abdul Khabir is a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and a registered Professional Technologist. He has led and participated in numerous research, consultancy, and industry projects involving government agencies and industry partners. His scholarly works have been published in journals and professional publications covering sustainable logistics, maritime safety, artificial intelligence in trucking, online food delivery, and logistics service quality. He is also actively involved in postgraduate supervision, professional training, policy-oriented research, and academic–industry engagement in the transport and logistics sector.

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UUM ONLINE: Sintok – Pensyarah Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Teknologi dan Logistik (STML), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Prof. Madya Dr. Mohd Azril Ismail, *CMILT*, mengetengahkan pandangan strategik mengenai projek Land Bridge Thailand menerusi kolum khas Professional Reflection dalam buletin profesional CILTM Pulse terbitan Julai 2026.

Makalah berbentuk pandangan ekonomi atau *Economics Opinion* itu bertajuk *"Rethinking Thailand's Land Bridge and What It Really Means for Malaysia"*. Penulisan tersebut dihasilkan bersama Ts. Dr. Abdul Khabir Rahmat, *CMILT*, Pengerusi Pengajian Pascasiswazah di Malaysia Institute of Transport (MITRANS), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam.

Penerbitan oleh *Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Malaysia* (CILTM) itu menjadi wadah kepada kedua-dua ahli akademik berkenaan untuk menilai secara kritis kedudukan projek Land Bridge Thailand serta implikasi sebenar pembangunannya terhadap sistem pelabuhan, perdagangan dan logistik Malaysia.



Professional REFLECTION

ECONOMICS OPINION
RETHINKING THAILAND'S LAND BRIDGE AND WHAT IT REALLY MEANS FOR MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Thailand's Ranong–Chumphon Land Bridge is routinely marketed as a peninsula crossing shortcut that will pull cargo away from the Strait of Malacca. That framing flatters the map and misreads the economics. A land bridge does not remove a bottleneck the way a canal does. It replaces one continuous voyage with a sequence of separate and potentially vulnerable transfers, involving a port, then rail or road transport, then another port, then a second ship. Each of these transfers can introduce additional cost, delay and risk, even as the overall route is meant to reduce them.

Our views is that this project is best understood as a conditional, feeder scale logistics product rather than an inevitable rival to Singapore, Port Klang and the Port of Tanjung Pelepas. For Malaysia, the exposure is real but it is narrow. Footloose transshipment volumes are genuinely contestable. Anchored gateway cargo, tied to Malaysian factories and consumers, is not.

This paper through four things. First, how unresolved the project's commercial status still is. Second, its generalised cost economics, which look very different once risk and reliability are counted alongside distance. Third, the fiscal illusion built into its public private financing structure, which limits upfront government spending without actually removing the underlying economic risk. Fourth, the range of responses realistically available to Malaysia. It also gives serious attention to something that tends to get treated as an afterthought in this debate, the logistics governance and safety framework surrounding the corridor. That framework, more than the concrete or the announced capacity figures, will ultimately determine whether either country's infrastructure spending produces an adequate return.

Keywords: Thailand Land Bridge; Malaysia; Strait of Malacca; port competition; logistics governance; maritime safety; intermodal transport; public–private partnership; supply-chain resilience

1. A Shorter Line On A Map Is Not A Better Supply Chain

Every megaproject debate eventually comes down to a picture. A red line drawn across a peninsula, shorter than the blue arc of the sea route it is meant to replace. Thailand's Land Bridge has been promoted largely on this kind of cartographic logic. The proposal involves a corridor of roughly 90 kilometres connecting a new deep water port at Ranong on the Andaman Sea with another port at Chumphon on the Gulf of Thailand, at an estimated cost of about one trillion baht, or somewhere around US$30 billion (Wongcha-um, 2026). The pitch practically writes itself. Cut the detour around the Malay Peninsula. Bypass the Strait of Malacca. Take a slice of the busiest shipping lane in Asia.

The trouble is that freight does not travel along a line. It travels through contracts, cranes, timetables and customs desks. A container transiting the Strait can stay on one vessel from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. A container using the Land Bridge must be lifted off a ship at Ranong, marshalled, moved 90 kilometres by rail or road, stored again at Chumphon, and loaded onto a second vessel. That is not a shortcut, it is a new intermodal product competing against a mature, high-frequency maritime network that has spent decades compounding scale economies. Academic work on land bridge economics backs this scepticism. Wang and Meng (2011) show that a land bridge can shift Asian port market shares, but the size and even the direction of the shift depend on network structure and service quality, not on distance saved. Later studies of Southeast Asian port competition reach a similar conclusion from different perspectives. Cost, connectivity, terminal efficiency, and the behaviour of shipping alliances, rather than geography alone, determine which ports attract cargo (Dang & Yeo, 2017; Yap & Yang, 2024).

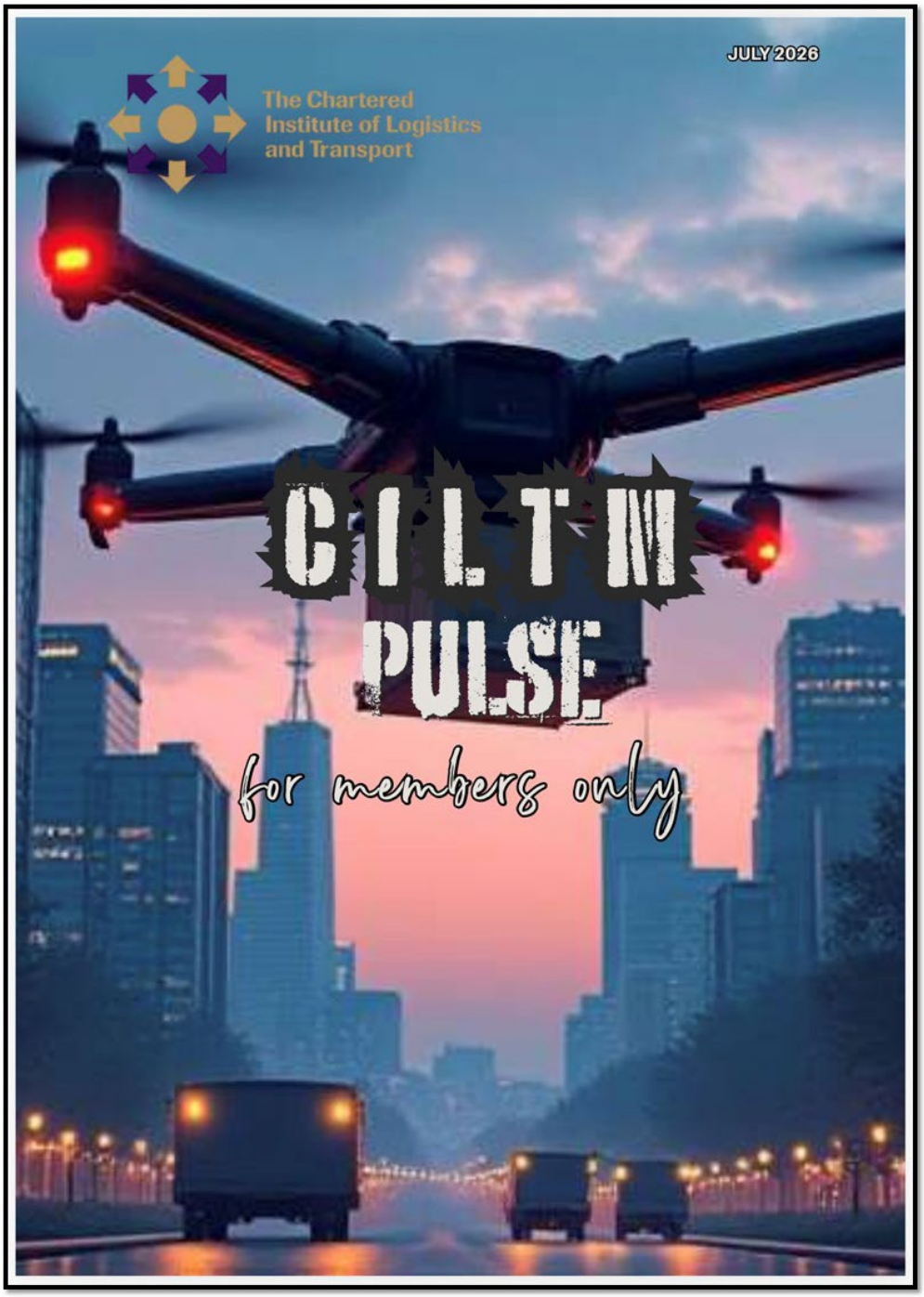
Dalam makalah tersebut, penulis menjelaskan bahawa cadangan koridor darat yang menghubungkan Ranong di Laut Andaman dengan Chumphon di Teluk Thailand tidak seharusnya dinilai semata-mata berdasarkan jarak perjalanan yang lebih pendek. Sebaliknya, kebolehdayaan projek itu perlu mengambil kira keseluruhan kos logistik, kecekapan pemindahan kargo, kebolehpercayaan jadual, keselamatan operasi, kesan alam sekitar dan keupayaan penyelarasan antara pelbagai mod pengangkutan.

Menurut penilaian yang dikemukakan, Land Bridge tidak berfungsi seperti sebuah terusan yang membolehkan kapal meneruskan pelayaran tanpa gangguan. Penggunaan koridor itu memerlukan kargo dipunggah di satu pelabuhan, dipindahkan melalui darat dan dimuatkan semula ke kapal lain di pelabuhan kedua.

Proses tersebut mewujudkan beberapa titik pertukaran yang boleh meningkatkan kos, kelewatan dan risiko sekiranya tidak disokong oleh tadbir urus serta sistem operasi yang benar-benar bersepadu.

Makalah berkenaan turut membawa pendekatan yang seimbang terhadap kedudukan Malaysia. Projek tersebut dilihat mempunyai nilai strategik kepada Thailand, khususnya sebagai koridor logistik nasional dan subrantau.

Namun, potensinya untuk menggantikan Selat Melaka atau mencabar secara langsung kedudukan Pelabuhan Klang dan Pelabuhan Tanjung Pelepas sebagai hab pemindahan kapal antarabangsa tidak seharusnya dianggap sebagai sesuatu yang pasti.



Bagi Malaysia, penulis menggariskan keperluan untuk memperkukuh pelabuhan negara sebagai sebahagian daripada satu sistem logistik nasional yang saling melengkapi. Prestasi pelabuhan juga perlu dinilai berdasarkan kebolehpercayaan perkhidmatan, tempoh penghantaran, kecekapan pengendalian kargo dan keupayaan menghadapi gangguan, bukan sekadar jumlah kontena yang dikendalikan.

Penulisan itu turut menekankan bahawa Malaysia tidak seharusnya bertindak secara tergesa-gesa melalui pembinaan infrastruktur baharu atau persaingan kadar pelabuhan semata-mata. Sebarang pelaburan, termasuk pembangunan pelabuhan dan integrasinya dengan Laluan Rel Pantai Timur (ECRL), perlu dipacu oleh permintaan kargo yang nyata, laluan perdagangan yang dikenal pasti serta keperluan pelanggan sebenar.

Pada masa yang sama, perkembangan ekonomi di selatan Thailand boleh diterjemahkan sebagai peluang kepada negeri-negeri di utara Semenanjung. Kedah, Perlis dan Pulau Pinang berpotensi memperoleh manfaat melalui pengukuhan hubungan logistik rentas sempadan, pembangunan rantaian bekalan terkawal suhu serta pertumbuhan aktiviti pembuatan di sekitar Padang Besar dan Bukit Kayu Hitam.



Aspek keselamatan dan tadbir urus turut diberikan perhatian penting dalam makalah tersebut. Penulis berpandangan bahawa infrastruktur fizikal sahaja tidak mencukupi untuk menjamin kejayaan sesebuah koridor logistik.

Keupayaan menyelaras operasi pelabuhan, rel dan jalan raya, mengurus kargo berbahaya, menghadapi ancaman siber serta melindungi ekosistem pesisir akan menentukan tahap keyakinan syarikat perkapalan, pengendali logistik, penanggung insurans dan masyarakat terhadap projek berkenaan.

Penerbitan pandangan seperti ini menyerlahkan sumbangan kepakaran ahli akademik STML, UUM khususnya dalam membahaskan isu ekonomi dan logistik serantau yang mempunyai kepentingan dan impak langsung kepada Malaysia.

Ia juga memperlihatkan peranan STML dalam membawa analisis akademik melangkaui lingkungan universiti untuk dimanfaatkan oleh komuniti profesional, pembuat dasar dan pemain industri pengangkutan serta logistik dalam pembangunan negara.

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