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`Malaysia rejected interim arrangements'

SINGAPORE yesterday said Malaysia has rejected the interim arrangements that the republic had offered to Malaysian Immigration at the Woodlands Train Checkpoint (WTCP).

Its Ministry of Home Affairs, in a statement released last night, said Malaysia, "abruptly ended" the July 28 talks to resolve the problems over railway travel procedures.

If Malaysian Immigration insists on executing their duties at Tanjung Pagar railway station after July 31 1998, this would inconvenience rail passengers.

Singapore will move its Immigration and Quarantine Checkpoint (ICQ) from the Tanjung Pagar railway station in central Singapore to a new checkpoint at Woodlands on August 1 1998.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on Monday said that Malaysia would not move its checkpoint to Woodlands.

The statement said the Malaysian Immigration will cease to have any authority to perform their functions at Tanjung Pagar once Singapore Immigration is no longer present to lend them their authority.

"Malaysian Immigration officers performing immigration functions at Tanjung Pagar will be acting without legal authority and contrary to the proper sequence of immigration clearance.

"All immigration endorsements made by them on Singapore passports at Tanjung Pagar will be unauthorised and improper," it said.

Accordingly, questions of serious irregularity in the passport will arise under Singapore law.

As the sequence of immigration clearance in the passport will be contrary to international practice, foreign national passengers exiting from Singapore with such unauthorised and improper endorsements on their passports may face difficulties at Singapore Immigration checkpoints.

It said, however, travellers entering Singapore by rail from Johor Baru will not be affected as they will follow the correct order of immigration clearance.

"(July 28) talks broke down because, notwithstanding understandings that had been reached between Singapore Foreign Minister Prof S. Jayakumar and the Malaysia Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during the 31st Asean Ministerial Meeting in Manila on July 25, Malaysian officials insisted that Malaysian Immigration should be located inside the building at WTCP.

"If this was not possible, they said that Malaysian Immigration would remain at Tanjung Pagar railway station," it said.

Bernama reports: Malaysia will announce today details on the deadlock in a dispute with Singapore over the Malaysian immigration checkpoint at the Tanjung Pagar railway station in Singapore, senior officials said yesterday.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad will reveal the details behind Malaysia's decision to maintain the checkpoint at the Tanjung Pagar railway station that is owned by KTM Bhd.

Abdul Kadir is scheduled to hold a news briefing in the afternoon. Before this, he was attending the Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) which ended in Manila yesterday.

"A statement will be issued during the briefing," said an official.

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