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Singapore-Malaysia

RAIL TRAVELLERS MAY FACE DIFFICULTIES, SAYS S'PORE

By: Tan Hock Guan

SINGAPORE, July 30 (Bernama) -- Singapore said today that talks with Malaysia to resolve the row over railway travel procedures have broken down and travellers will face difficulties if Malaysia does not move its immigration checkpoint to a new location from Saturday.

Singapore will move its customs, immigration and quarantine checkpoint from the Tanjong Pagar railway station in central Singapore to a new checkpoint at Woodlands, close to its border with Malaysia.

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

In a statement issued here, the Home Ministry said: " The Malaysian Immigration will cease to have any authority to perform their functions at Tanjong Pagar once Singapore Immigration is no longer present to lend them their authority"

The ministry said it had on many occasions since 1989 informed Malaysia of its intention to move its checkpoint and this move would be effected from Aug 1 this year.

" Singapore has also on many occasions informed Malaysia that, with effect from that date, Malaysia's CIQ (customs, immigration and quarantine) operations cannot remain at the Tanjong Pagar railway station," it added.

The ministry said the sequence of immigration clearance would be illogical and contrary to international practice if Malaysia's CIQ remained at the Tanjong Pagar station after Singapore's CIQ moved to Woodlands.

It said Singapore Immigration must clear departing passengers for exit from Singapore before Malaysian Immigration could clear them for entry into Malaysia.

" All immigration endorsements made by Malaysian Immigration officers at the Tanjong Pagar railway station on Singapore passports will be unauthorised and improper. Accordingly, questions of serious irregularity in the passport will arise under Singapore law," it said.

The ministry said as the sequence of immigration clearance in the passport would be contrary to international practice, foreign nationals exiting from Singapore with such unauthorised and improper endorsements on their passports might face difficulties at Singapore Immigration checkpoints.

But it said that travellers entering Singapore from Johor Baru would not be affected as they were following the correct order of immigration clearance.

On the talks which broke down on Tuesday, the ministry said Malaysia insisted that its Immigration checkpoint should be located inside the building at Woodlands and if this was not possible, then its Immigration would remain at the Tanjong Pagar railway station.

Singapore had proposed space for Malaysian Immigration to set up booths on the platform at Woodlands as an interim arrangement, pending resolution of Malaysia's claim of a legal right for its Immigration to remain in Singapore.

It said the interim arrangements for Malaysian Immigration at Woodlands would have avoided inconvenience to rail passengers.

But Malaysia rejected the interim arrangements, it added.

-- BERNAMA

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