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Shake off siege mentality, Johor MB tells Singapore

KOTA TINGGI, Mon. - Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman today led other critics of the Singapore Government's decision to move the Customs, immigration and quarantine facilities to Woodlands from Tanjong Pagar in urging the republic to shake off its "siege mentality".

Ghani said Singapore's action in stirring up issues such as the CIQ operations in the Tanjong Pagar railway station was evidence of this mentality.

Others who criticised the move today were Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam, the Backbenchers Club and Gerakan.

Backbenchers Club information chief Abdul Rahman Sulaiman said that since Singapore had made a unilateral decision on the matter, it must take the initiative to resolve the problem if it wanted bilateral relations to continue.

"All this while, Malaysia had been very tolerant in its relations with Singapore in the spirit of neighbourliness and solidarity. Sadly, Singapore did not appreciate this," he said.

The club also urged the Singapore media to end their anti-Malaysia campaign.

Meanwhile, Umno Youth proposed that the Government consider suspending new bilateral dealings with Singapore until its Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong states his Government's official position on contentious issues between the two countries.

Goh's official stance must be based on the understanding reached during his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad early this year which showed Malaysia's sincerity in solving bilateral problems, the movement said.

As in the last two days, train services to and from Tanjong Pagar station ran smoothly today.

Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad southern region manager Mohamad Dzuriat said all 12 services - six from Johor Baru and six from Tajong Pagar - arrived and departed according to schedule.

Speaking to reporters after attending a "meet-the-people" session organised by Johor Umno Youth today, Ghani said there was no need for Singapore leaders to harbour feelings of suspicion and fear towards their neighbours, particularly Malaysia.

He said such feelings were unhealthy and would not help the republic in its efforts to forge a good understanding with Malaysia.

"On Johor's side, I can say that the State has always abided by the various agreements that we have signed with Singapore, including the two to supply water to the republic until 2011 and 2060.

"The republic's leaders need not harbour unnecessary fears that we will rebuke these agreements."

He said it was, therefore, unbecoming for Singapore to disregard its agreement with Malaysia on its right to operate a railway station in Tanjong Pagar.

"While Malaysia has always adhered to the spirit of 'prosper thy neighbour', the same cannot be said of Singapore.

"Instead of feeling happy for Malaysia when we built a bigger international airport or upgraded our sea ports, Singapore, despite its prosperity and advanced infrastructure, has shown a siege mentality by continuously negating our efforts and showing us in bad light."

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