

JB may soon be final stop for KTM trains

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PETALING JAYA: KTM Berhad will not roll into Singapore once the new facilities for the final stop are completed in Johor Baru.

Transport Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Donald Lim, in confirming this yesterday, said the Immigration and Customs departments were finalising plans to build bigger facilities for clearing passengers at their checkpoints in Johor Baru.

"The Government has decided to stop the railway proceeding into Singapore from Johor Baru because it is too expensive to maintain the stretch.

"In the government-to-government talks recently, we did express the possibility of stopping our service to Singapore. We want to stop earlier but we cannot because the facilities are not ready yet. It will take a year or two before we stop the service.

"The building of the tunnel is far too expensive in view of the economic slowdown," he said in an interview after visiting four schools in his constituency here.

The 600m-long tunnel is expected to cost more than RM1.5bil, while a bridge could cost about RM500mil.

The tunnel project was part of a package of outstanding issues discussed during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's meeting on Sept 4 at Putrajaya.

Other issues included long-term supply of water to Singapore and the railway land located in Tanjung Pagar, Singapore, which the republic wanted to acquire for alternative land in Woodlands.

Lim said with the building of the new checkpoints at Johor Baru, the existing checkpoints in Singapore would cease operations.

He said KTM Berhad was losing about RM300mil annually from its railway operations in the peninsula.

Last week, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would consult Singapore on whether to scrap its plan to build a railway tunnel from Johor to the republic.