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Passport

SMART PASSPORT HOLDER DENIED ENTRY INTO SEOUL

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- A Malaysian was denied entry into South Korea on Monday, allegedly because immigration officers doubted the authenticity of his smart passport.

Yap Boon Huat, 25, also claimed that he was kicked in the leg by an immigration officer and had his passport torn before he was ordered to return to Malaysia.

Speaking at a news conference at Wisma MCA here today, Yap said he had gone to Seoul for a six-day holiday but his plans were dashed because he was suspected to be an immigrant from China using a forged passport.

Yap, a medical goods trader, said he ran into problems at the immigration counter of the Seoul international airport when he produced his smart passport, which has a chip containing key personal particulars.

The smart passport, the first of its kind in the world, was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1998.

Yap, who obtained his passport on Feb 8 this year, said he explained to the immigration officer that his passport was not stamped in Malaysia because its security features allowed it to be scanned.

He was detained for more than two hours at the airport before he was deported.

"I asked for permission to contact the Malaysian embassy but my request was ignored," said Yap of Jalan Ipoh here.

MCA Public Service and Complaints Bureau head Michael Chong said this was the first such case he had come across.

He has informed Wisma Putra of the incident and urged it to take steps to prevent a recurrence.

"We also want Wisma Putra to explain to the Korean authorities that they have no right to tear the passports of people from other countries and to investigate Yap's claim of being denied permission to contact our embassy there," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SHI AZZ MAI YBY