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Introduction of Cross-Border Railways (Border Control Co-Location) Bill

7 April 2026

1. The Cross-Border Railways (Border Control Co-Location) Bill (“Bill”) was introduced for First Reading in Parliament today.

Background

2. The Bill supports the operationalisation of the Johor Bahru – Singapore Rapid Transit System (“RTS Link”). The RTS Link will connect Woodlands North station in Singapore with Bukit Chagar station in Johor Bahru, with a train journey time of about five minutes between the two stations and the capacity to serve up to 10,000 commuters per hour in each direction.

3. A key feature of the RTS Link is that all travellers will only need to clear immigration once, at the point of embarkation, to make travel more efficient and seamless. This is enabled by co-locating both countries' customs, immigration and quarantine (“CIQ”) facilities at each of the RTS Link stations, and by each country deploying officers at the other country's station to carry out CIQ clearance and security-related checks.

4. The Bill enables Singapore to give effect to these arrangements, specifically: (i) the co-location of border clearance, (ii) coordination of railway security and management of cross-border incidents, and (iii) reciprocal data protection.

Key Features of the Bill

Co-located Border Controls

Enabling Malaysia’s CIQ Operations in Singapore

5. The Bill introduces provisions to demarcate Designated Areas (“DA”) in Singapore to be Malaysia’s CIQ zone, where Malaysia border laws will apply and Malaysian officers can perform border clearance and railway security checks on travellers and goods bound for Malaysia (“preclearance officers”). For the RTS Link, the DA will be in Woodlands North station and notices will be prominently displayed at the perimeter of these areas to inform the public.

6. Singapore’s laws will continue to apply in the DA, and only Malaysian preclearance officers recognised by Singapore can conduct official duties within the DA in Singapore (i.e., at Woodlands North station for RTS Link). The Bill sets out the processes for the recognition of Malaysian preclearance officers by the Minister for Home Affairs (“Minister”). The Minister may also, without giving any reason, refuse or withdraw the recognition of a Malaysian preclearance officer.



7. Within the DA, Malaysian preclearance officers will be allowed to exercise specific powers to perform CIQ operations. These include checking of travel documents, screening of travellers, and refusing entry or importation of goods bound for Malaysia. There are safeguards on the exercise of these powers. For example, Malaysian preclearance officers are not allowed to make an arrest in Singapore. If they detain any person or item, they must transfer custody to a Singapore preclearance officer as soon as is practicable.

8. Malaysian preclearance officers will have certain protections and immunities when performing official duties in Singapore. For instance, they will be deemed as public servants and offences committed against them while they are performing official duties in Singapore will be treated as offences committed against Singapore public servants under Singapore's laws. These powers and protections are given on a reciprocal basis, i.e., Singapore preclearance officers performing official duties at Bukit Chagar station will enjoy equivalent powers and protections in Malaysia.

9. The Bill will empower Singapore preclearance officers to conduct security checks on any departing traveller for items controlled or prohibited under Malaysian law. If such items are found, Singapore preclearance officers may permit a traveller to voluntarily discard the items, unless the item poses a threat to human safety, is a live creature, or is evidence relevant to an investigation.

Enabling Singapore's CIQ Operations in Malaysia

10. This Bill allows the Minister to order the deployment of Singapore preclearance officers to Malaysia (at Bukit Chagar station for the RTS Link). These officers will have similar powers, rights, and immunities under Singapore law as when they are performing the same duties in Singapore. The Bill also modifies certain Singapore border control laws to adapt them for co-located border control arrangements in Malaysia, enabling Singapore preclearance officers deployed in Malaysia to continue to keep our borders safe.

11. Malaysia has enacted legislation to allow Singapore preclearance officers to exercise powers necessary for the performance of official duties at Bukit Chagar station, and has granted them the relevant privileges and immunities.

Cross-Border Incident Management

12. The Bill provides for the coordination of security and safety operations between Singapore and Malaysia, including how both countries will respond to incidents that occur in transit between the two countries.

13. Singapore and Malaysia will continue to supervise security and safety operations and manage incidents within its own territory. For incidents occurring within Malaysia's DA at Woodlands North station, Singapore will be responsible for resolving them. Similarly, Malaysia will be managing incidents occurring within Singapore's DA at Bukit Chagar station.

14. For cross-border incidents (such as an incident that occurs on board a train in transit), the Bill provides that Singapore incident management officers (e.g., from SPF or SCDF) may respond to such incidents on/near trains and railway tracks in Malaysia, to prevent the loss of life and reduce damage to property. Malaysian incident management officers may likewise respond to cross-border railway incidents in Singapore under similar circumstances. Both countries' incident management officers will be accorded powers, rights, and immunities for this purpose, subject to limitations. No Singapore officer in Malaysia may make an arrest in Malaysia, and no Malaysian officer in Singapore may make an arrest in Singapore.

15. Singapore and Malaysia authorities have also worked closely on a comprehensive set of Standard Operating Procedures ("SOPs") for incident management. Taken together, these laws and SOPs will enable effective response to cross-border incidents and help keep travellers safe.



16. Both countries will hold concurrent criminal jurisdiction for incidents on trains in transit and on the railway tracks between the two countries. The Bill establishes Singapore's jurisdiction over these areas. As criminal jurisdiction is concurrent, there are arrangements on how Singapore and Malaysia would exercise such jurisdiction. In general, the country in whose territory the train journey is completed has the primary right to exercise jurisdiction. However, the other country may request the country with primary jurisdiction to waive its right where there is greater public interest for the former to investigate and prosecute. This approach is similar to other major cross-border railways, such as over the Channel Fixed Link between the United Kingdom and France. It ensures clarity of jurisdiction when the exact location of the offence is unclear.

Reciprocal Data Protection

17. The Bill provides that all information and data collected or generated by Singapore officers in the course of their official duties in Malaysia are to be treated as if they were collected or generated in Singapore and governed by Singapore's laws. This complements legislation enacted by Malaysia which requires that a device or equipment supplied by the Singapore Government for use at Bukit Chagar station shall be inviolable and immune from seizure, confiscation or any other form of interference by Malaysia. There are equivalent provisions protecting information and data collected or generated by Malaysian officers deployed at Woodlands North station.

Related and Consequential Amendments to Other Acts

18. This Bill also makes consequential amendments to other Acts that are related to the purposes of the Bill. For example:

(a) The Immigration Act will be amended to allow the Minister to make Bukit Chagar station an authorised point of entry or immigration control post.

(b) Amendments will be made to the Civil Defence Act and the Police Force Act to provide for SCDF and SPF officers to respond to cross-border railway incidents.

(c) The Passports Act will be amended to enable Singapore to exercise criminal jurisdiction over passport offences detected at Singapore's DA at Bukit Chagar station.

Conclusion

19. This Bill plays an important role in supporting the operation of the RTS Link. It provides the legal basis for the co-location of border clearance, and for the coordination of railway security and the management of cross-border incidents.

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Ministry of Home Affairs

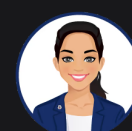
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