

After the bridge is this 150m-long section of road that has been cordoned off by a row of cement barricades, offering pedestrians some form of protection against vehicles zipping by.



The section of road that follows the stretch with just a 30cm-wide ledge for walking. In order to reach the ramp leading to the bus bay, pedestrians must run across the busy three-lane road. ST PHOTOS: SHAHRIYA YAHAYA

No proper footpaths at times

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the team had to head up a 100m-long ramp that led to the bay.

This meant a run across the three-lane road, which had a constant stream of traffic, to reach the ramp that also did not

have a footpath.

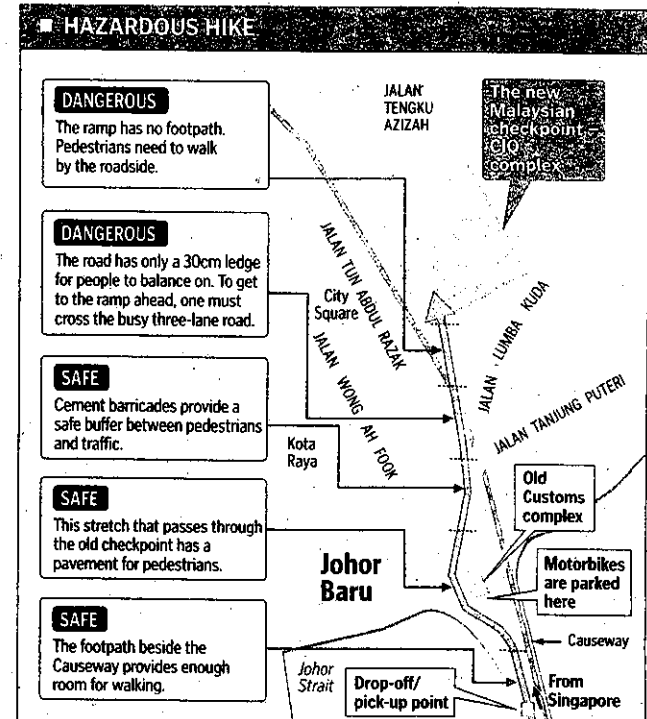
On the way up the ramp, The Straits Times team was spotted by four CIQ officers at the immigration kiosks for cars. However, no one called out or signalled for us to stop.

The hike ended at the top of the ramp, where buses stopped for passengers to

alight. No other pedestrians were spotted along the walk, which took about 45 minutes.

The walk from the CIQ complex to the Singapore checkpoint was observed to be just as hazardous as there were no proper footpaths along the way.

ESTHER TAN



GRAPHICS: G. CHANDRADAS



Singaporeans waiting at JB's Danga City Mall for their train ride back home. Services were delayed because of a landslide along the line last week. ST PHOTO: LIM WUI LIANG

Delays mar start of JB mall shuttle

By CHERYL TAN

A NEW shuttle train from Singapore to a brand new shopping mall in Johor Baru has got off to a bad start.

On its first day of operation, on Monday, one of the morning trains heading from Danga City Mall to Singapore was delayed by more than an hour, leaving passengers angry and frustrated.

Yesterday was no better, with Singapore-bound passengers hoping to catch the 2.19pm train having to wait at the station in the mall for over an hour.

Several other train services plying between the new seven-storey mega mall, one of JB's biggest, have also been delayed by between 10 and 20 minutes.

The delays are said to be due to a landslide last Friday in Gemas - a small town in Negri Sembilan.

The trains on the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) railway between Malaysia and Singapore generally start from north-

ern Malaysia, with various services stopping at different towns along the way.

Passengers left waiting at the station in Danga City Mall were told by KTM's ticketing agent that the delay was due to repairs and cleaning works on the train tracks because of the landslide.

The additional stop at the Danga City Mall was launched on Monday as a new service linking KTM's Tanjong Pagar station in Singapore to the new mall.

The 90-minute journey is supposed to make it more convenient for Singaporeans going to JB to shop as the train stops right at the mall. Other shopping centres popular among Singaporeans, like Pelangi and City Square, are just five minutes away from Danga City Mall by taxi.

But the train delays have left Singaporean shoppers miffed.

Retiree Susan Tan, 56, said: "I picked the 2.19pm train to avoid the peak hour jam back home. But it's going to be hard because of the delay."

She finally reached Singapore at 5pm - 50 minutes later than scheduled.

For bank executive Winson Goh, 40, it was an exasperating wait as there was no prior notice of any train delay when he and his wife bought their tickets.

"If we had known, we could have gone to grab something to eat instead of waiting around aimlessly," said Mr Goh, who was with his wife Doreen Hiew, 38.

Madam Hiew, a business analyst, said: "They said it will arrive at 3.10pm but it's still not here."

And there was no announcement when the train finally pushed into the station 10 minutes later. After three minutes of boarding time, a short hoot of the train's horn announced its departure, leaving several people scrambling to get onboard.

Retiree Sam Lim, 58, and his group of friends decided to get a refund on their 2.19pm train ticket and head to City Square after a futile one-hour wait.

"We're going to take the public bus back...the train times are too unreliable."

It's no walk in the park

THE Straits Times took a hike between the Singapore checkpoint and the new Sultan Iskandar Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex, and discovered that the roads in between made for a dangerous walk.

Starting from the Singapore Woodlands checkpoint, the 1km walk along the Causeway bridge was an easy one with a designated footpath on the side.

Midway along the bridge was an unofficial pick-up and drop-off point.

From here, people could either hitch a ride on to the new CIQ complex or alight to continue their journey to the Singapore checkpoint on foot.

After the bridge ended, the next 200m was a relatively safe, meandering walk on a pavement that passed through the old Malaysian checkpoint.

This led to a 150m-long road section that was cordoned off from passing vehicles with a row of cement

barricades.

Problems began in the next 150m stretch.

Progress became markedly slower, with no proper footpath or walking area except for a 30cm-wide cement ledge.

With a metal fence on the immediate left of the ledge and motorcycles zipping by on the right, one has to be extremely alert and careful. At times, the motorbikes came within inches of those walking on the ledge.

In addition to that, the path towards the new CIQ meant walking in the same direction as the traffic. It was virtually impossible to look out for vehicles as they came from behind.

In order to make it to the bus bay that led to the immigration counters,

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The easy part - the 1km walk along the Causeway bridge with a designated footpath on the side. ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

Confusion over Causeway walk ban

ICA unaware of rule;
Johor official says law in
place but not enforced yet

BY ESTHER TAN

PEOPLE are no longer allowed to walk between the Singapore and Malaysia checkpoints at the Causeway, but there seems to be some confusion about the new rule.

The ban was implemented by Malaysia after the opening of the Sultan Iskandar Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex, which is about 500m further up the road from the old complex.

Johor state immigration director Mohd Nasri Ishak told The Straits Times yesterday that walking on the Causeway - from both directions - was not permitted.

But Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) said it was not aware of the rule and its officers do not stop people who opt to walk.

Mr Mohd Nasri said that although the law is already in place, it has yet to be enforced but it will be soon.

He did not give a specific date when enforcement will begin.

Security, police and immigration officers at the Malaysian checkpoint verbally inform those who pass through the complex about the new ruling, he added.

Mr Mohd Nasri explained that as the

new complex was built for security reasons, people are not allowed to walk in unless they arrived in a vehicle.

"The government doesn't want just anyone to walk into the building," he said.

Mr Mohd Nasri also pointed out that the roads at the checkpoint were not designed for walking as they have no walkways. "The public should realise that walking to the new complex is very dangerous," he said.

Malaysia's ban on walking on the Causeway has resulted in many Malaysians being stranded at the Singapore checkpoint during massive jams along the Causeway, The Star newspaper reported earlier this week.

Prior to the ban, people were able to

walk across to the old Malaysian checkpoint when there was a lack of buses during the peak periods. It took about 15 minutes to walk between the two sides.

However when the new checkpoint opened, people on the Malaysian side found that they could not walk across, and this resulted in ugly scenes as people fought their way to board buses at the new CIQ complex.

When contacted, SBS Transit's vice-president of corporate communications Tammy Tan said ridership in general has remained fairly constant.

But an SMRT spokesman said that the company has observed a general increase in passengers using its bus service 950, but did not give exact figures.

Malaysian Ng Wee Chin, a 22-year-old deliveryman who works in Singapore, said: "I'm not walking over to Singapore from the new checkpoint because it's too far and dangerous."

His sentiments were echoed by Singapore Institute of Management student Hau Siow Hoon.

The 22-year-old Malaysian has not taken the walk from the new checkpoint to Singapore and she does not intend to try.

"Even the distance between the old checkpoint and the Singapore checkpoint is too far for me," said Miss Hau.

She added that the narrow roads and the lack of a walkway made it dangerous for pedestrians.

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