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Ling: Currency factor not included in project cost

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THE inception report on the trans-Asian railway project, made by government-appointed KL Consult Sdn Bhd, has not included currency fluctuations into its calculations of the project's costs.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, when asked on the impact of ringgit to the project's cost, said so far, this cannot be determined because the study on the railway's routes does not include such a variable.

KL Consult Sdn Bhd submitted an inception report two months ago. The final report of the study is expected to be ready in April, next year.

"It (the currency impact) could not be determined yet as the study had not reached that stage," he said after opening the Second Special Working Group Meeting of the Singapore-Kunming Railway yesterday.

Dr Ling said after the group is done with the inception report, it will prepare an interim report before preparing the final one.

The two-day meeting is expected to select "best of the best" three possible routes of the 3,000-km to 4,000-km long railway link, which was submitted by the consultant.

Dr Ling said this decision has to be made fast to allow immediate take-off of the project, which was mooted last year by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The route, which is expected to be opted for by the meeting's transport experts, is the one that links Singapore-Kuala Lumpur-Bangkok-Poipet-Sisophon-Phnom Penh-Lok Ninh-Ho Chi Minh City-Hanoi-Kunming.

It is the best route because the proposed railway will be built on a flatter terrain. This will help in terms of cost and completion time.

"The project will act as a catalyst towards economic and social development among Asean and its future members," Dr Ling said.

The meeting is attended by China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, the Asean Secretariat, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Malaysia is coordinating the feasibility study which will take into account economic, environmental, technical, engineering and cross-border facilitation.

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