

30/09/1997

PM's rail project suggestion accepted

PETALING JAYA, Mon. - A special working group meeting on the Trans-Asia railway project today accepted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's suggestion to complete one section of the route while reports on the scheme are being drawn up.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today there was consensus on the matter among delegates from the eight countries, the Asean Secretariat and the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The eight countries are Cambodia, China, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The Trans-Asia railway link, stretching 5,513km, was mooted by Dr Mahathir at the fifth Asean Summit in Bangkok last December.

"Although the ultimate objective is (to complete) the total network which will benefit all the countries, something has to start somewhere," Dr Ling said.

He earlier chaired the first plenary session of the two-day meeting being held at the Pan Pacific Glenmarie Resort.

Dr Ling said from preliminary studies, including those by the Asian Development Bank and Escap, the easiest route to build would be the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur-Bangkok-Poipet-Sisophon-Vientianne-Phnom Penh-Lok Ninh-Ho Chi Minh City-Hanoi-Kunming stretch.

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