

04/09/1997

Push for Trans-Asian railway to be a reality

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Cabinet today agreed that the multi-billion ringgit Trans-Asian railway project linking Singapore to Kunming in South China should be made a reality as soon as possible.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Cabinet had agreed that the Malaysian consortium involved in the proposed project which would connect 4,700km of railway track from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and China should take the lead in getting the project off the ground as quickly as possible.

The consortium is led by KTM Berhad and comprises Renong Berhad, Diversified Resources Berhad and Bolton Properties.

Dr Ling said the Cabinet decided that while Malaysia should take the lead in getting the project off the ground, it should be done in the spirit of Asean.

"The Cabinet wants the other countries, through which the railway passes, to be actively involved,"

"Countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia which may not be able to provide capital can provide land which will be converted into equity in the project," he said.

Speaking after the Cabinet meeting, Dr Ling said the project was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir during the Asean Summit in Bangkok in 1995 and all countries involved had expressed interest in the proposal.

He said extensive studies on the form of participation of the countries involved had been conducted and a meeting would be held in Kuala Lumpur next month to discuss further details on how to get the project off ground as soon as possible.

Dr Ling had announced last month that the project would temporarily be put on hold due to the latest political developments in Cambodia.

"However, we believe that the situation in Cambodia will normalise when the project takes off," he said today.

Dr Ling said a meeting of senior officials of the countries involved would work out a viable package and would involve the re-development of many railway stations and railway tracks along the 4,700km route.

He said the project would also include the development of commercial centres and the redevelopment of many stations and the building of new ones.

"Our main objective is that all countries involved should benefit from the project.

"We will also invite other Asean countries not already involved the project, namely the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei to participate," he said.

(END)