

28/09/2000

Cabinet green light for trans-Asian rail link

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Cabinet has endorsed the proposal to build the trans-Asian rail link and has appointed two consultancy firms to carry out feasibility studies.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said KL Consult and Za'aba consultants have been selected to carry out preliminary studies on the feasibility of the rail links from now until 2003.

Speaking at a Press conference after chairing his ministry's weekly post-Cabinet meeting today, Dr Ling said the expected time-frame to complete the 4,000km to 5,000km project is three years from 2003.

He said the expected cost for the project is US\$2.5 billion (RM9.5 billion) but declined to elaborate on which parties were going to bear the costs.

"There has been suggestions of privatisation but let the governments and the private sector handle the matter," he said.

Dr Ling said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would inform other Asean leaders on the Cabinet's decision at the group's summit (in Singapore) later this year.

He reiterated that the railway link would bring lots of economic benefits to surrounding towns and cities once completed.

"It will be a similar case to when the North-South Expressway was completed previously. Many surrounding towns and cities benefited due to accessibility," he said.

The idea of a trans-Asian rail link was mooted by Dr Mahathir at the Asean Summit in 1995 to connect Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar to Kunming, China.

(END)