

# China pledges RM15.2b for rail project

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GELANG PATAH: China has pledged US\$4bil (RM15.2bil) for the construction of the Trans-Asia Railway track from Singapore to Kunming, in what is seen as a boost for the project proposed by Malaysia.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the money would be used to finance the construction of the track between Bangkok and Kunming.

He said Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji had committed the fund.

"The Trans-Asia Railway, when completed, will be connected to the Trans-Siberia system which is capable of reducing travelling time and transportation costs from Korea and China to Europe.

"The travelling time to transport cargo through this Trans-Siberia rail is about 16 days compared with 26 days by sea while the cost can be reduced by US\$800 (RM3,040) per TEU (20ft equivalent unit)," he said at the launch of Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad's track at the Port of Tanjung Pelepas near here yesterday.

The track, launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, links the port with KTMB's main track in Skudai.

Dr Ling said Malaysia was also serious about bringing back the golden era when trains were the most popular mode of transportation, both for people and cargo.