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China **help** for East Coast railway

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> Malaysia to sign agreement today

BEIJING: Malaysia and China will sign an agreement for the construction of the RM55 billion East Coast Railway Line (ECRL) connecting Port Klang and Tumpat today.

Treasury Secretary-General Tan Sri Irwan Serigar Abdullah said if financing for the project could be finalised by year-end, the double-track rail project could take off by next year.

"The project would confer several benefits such as lowering the transportation cost between the west and east coasts and reducing travelling time.

"It would also create more jobs and business opportunities for Malaysians, especially rural folks," he told the Malaysian media upon arrival here, as part of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak's delegation which arrived yesterday for a six-day official visit.

Irwan said although the Framework Financing Agreement and Engineering, Procurement, Construction (EPC) contract had not been finalised yet, the financing offered by China was



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Najib being greeted by China's Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Zhen Min upon his arrival at Beijing International Airport yesterday.

competitive, with a low rate and long repayment period of 20 years.

He said the project was crucial to Malaysia and cannot be delayed since it would not only develop the country's transportation sector but also help speed up the growth of small towns along the way.

It would also assist in the

transfer of rail technology.

"Future development of railway is the in thing, and Malaysia needs to make the move in getting the technology and the new system in railway construction," he said.

Irwan added the project would be implemented in phases, the first phase from Port Klang to Gombak and Dungun, and the

second phase from Dungun to Tumpat.

Najib, in tabling the 2017 Budget, had said the project would connect townships such as Port Klang, ITT (Integrated Transport Terminal) Gombak, Bentong, Mentakab, Kuantan, Kemaman, Kerthel, Kuala Terengganu, Kota Baru and Tumpat. - Bernama