

MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE SEAL RTS DEAL

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Rapid Transit System, which connects JB and Woodlands, will be ready at end 2026

JOHOR BARU

MALAYSIA and Singapore yesterday agreed to proceed with the Rapid Transit System (RTS), with leaders of the two countries meeting at the midpoint of the Johor Causeway as a sign of the agreement.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and his Singaporean counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, accompanied by ministers from both countries, arrived at the world's busiest land border crossing about 10am.

Muhyiddin and Lee witnessed their transport ministers — Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong and Singapore's Ong Ye Kung — hold official documents to signify their agreement to proceed with the project.

Present were Senior Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, who is also international trade and industry minister, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Hasni Mohammad.

Singapore was represented by Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and former transport minister Khaw Boon Wan.

Muhyiddin and Lee wore face masks at the event.

"Thank you for settling the agreement (RTS) with us," said Lee to Muhyiddin, who replied:



Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and his Singaporean counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, at the signing of the Rapid Transit System project at the midway point of the Causeway yesterday. From left are Senior Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong. BERNAMA PIC

"Thank you for working hard."

Lee said the project would be completed in six years.

"*Insyallah*," said Muhyiddin.

The two leaders asked each other about the Covid-19 situation in each other's country.

"I hope I can cross the line (while pointing to the yellow line separating the two leaders) the next time without being quarantined," he said to Lee, to which both laughed.

The two leaders, as well as ministers from both sides, wore batik shirts.

This marked their first face-to-face meeting since Muhyiddin was appointed prime minister on March 1, while Lee was sworn in for another term as prime min-

ister on Monday, following his People's Action Party's win in the general election.

Malaysia and Singapore, in a joint statement, said they had concluded three agreements necessary to resume the project.

They concluded an agreement to amend the RTS Link Bilateral Agreement between the Malaysian and Singapore governments.

Apart from that, a joint-venture agreement between Singapore's SMRT RTS Pte Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SMRT Corporation Limited, and Malaysia's Prasarana RTS Operations Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, to constitute RTS Operations Pte

Ltd as an operator (OpCo), has been signed.

In addition, the Malaysian government and Singapore's Land Transport Authority signed a concession agreement to appoint RTS Operations as the OpCo for the first 30-year concession period.

"Today's event marks the culmination of several months of hard work, during which officials on both sides worked to find a common way forward on this project, despite the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic," said the statement.

Both countries said the resumption of the project underscored the deep and enduring bilateral relationship between the

two countries, and the collective desire to strengthen their win-win partnership.

"When completed, the RTS Link will ease Causeway congestion, improve connectivity, foster people-to-people ties and generate shared economic and social benefits," said the statement.

The project is expected to cost RM10 billion, of which RM3.7 billion will be borne by Malaysia.

RTS is a 4km rail line connecting Bukit Chagar in Johor Baru and Woodlands in Singapore.

The project has gone through discussions under three Malaysian prime ministers.

The project will begin next year and be completed by the end of 2026. **Bernama**