



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim meeting patrons at Restoran dan Katering Arham in Desa Pinggiran Putra, Kajang, yesterday before performing Friday prayers at a nearby mosque, PIC BY AIZUDDIN SAAD

KL-SINGAPORE HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

GOVT TO LOOK INTO JAPAN FIRMS' PULLOUT

PM declines to elaborate on next move as Monday deadline looms for RFI proposals

ADIB POVERA AND
NURSYAZWANI JAMIL
KAJANG
news@nst.com.my

DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim has confirmed reports that Japanese firms have pulled out from bidding for the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project.

The pullout comes three days before the deadline for companies to submit request for information (RFI) proposals for the project.

However, the prime minister, who is also finance minister, did not elaborate on the government's next course of action.

"We will look into it.

"I just received the report," he said after Friday prayers at the al-Hijrah mosque in Desa Pinggiran

Putra here.

Japanese news outlet Kyodo News reported that Japanese companies, including the East Japan Railway Co, intended to propose the Shinkansen bullet train system for the 350km rail project, but decided to withdraw.

Kyodo News, which quoted government and company sources, said it would be too risky for the firms to undertake the project without financial assistance from the Malaysian government.

This development is expected to be a boon for the China companies that built the high-speed rail line in Indonesia and are constructing another in Thailand.

In 2013, the governments of Malaysia and Singapore agreed to proceed with the HSR project.

In 2015, Japanese firms first expressed interest and the country's then transport minister, Keiichi Ishi, presented the Shinkansen system to Malaysian officials.

Barisan Nasional's fall from power after the 2018 general election put the future of the HSR in question, as the new government under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad delayed construction until 2020. In 2021, the Perikatan

Nasional administration under Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin cancelled the HSR, citing cost concerns. The delay and eventual termination of the project resulted in Malaysia paying Singapore hundreds of millions of ringgit in compensation.

The unity government revived the project last year.

Submissions for the RFI proposals were opened in July last year and the deadline is next Monday.

Last year, MyHSR Corporation Sdn Bhd said more than 60 per cent of the companies that had indicated their commitment to submit concept proposals requested an extension as they required more time to form consortia with potential partners and explore financial options.

With the close of RFI submission, the government is expected to shortlist companies within several months and start negotiations with the Singaporean government later this year, at the earliest.

The KL-Singapore HSR envisions a 350km fast train line that will reduce the journey time between the two cities to just 90 minutes from the current four hours by car.