

Japan Keen On KL-Singapore High Speed Train Project - Muhyiddin

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

SENDAI (Japan), March 15 (Bernama) -- Japan has reiterated its keenness to be involved in the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore high speed train project, the first in Southeast Asia, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

This was stated to him by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during their meeting on the sidelines of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction here, he told Malaysian journalists.

Muhyiddin, who arrived here Friday for a four-day working visit to Japan, was present for the conference yesterday and today.

The conference here, about 380 km from Tokyo, started on Saturday and ends on Wednesday.

The venue of the conference is in the centre of the Tohoku region, which was shaken by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami which resulted in the Fukushima nuclear reactor crisis.

Muhyiddin said the high speed train project was decided by the governments of Malaysia and Singapore to be implemented by the private sector and the offer for it would be made via an open tender.

"Generally, we are attracted by the Shinkansen system (Japan's high speed train system). The system is efficient, (uses) sophisticated technology and safety-wise, yet to record an accident or death.

"All these will be taken into account in our assessment in selecting the party to be involved when the tender is opened," he said, adding it was also important that Malaysia benefited from technology transfer in awarding the project.

"Besides this, the financing aspects must also be attractive so that the overall packages is the best on offer. All the have to be taken into consideration," he said.

He added that he had informed Abe that the project was in the fine tuning stage by Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Land Public Transport Commission and related agencies.

Muhyiddin said with the high technology and a good high speed train system in the country, the Japanese were seen as determined to be involved in the project.

"They appear to be pushing quite aggressively. They are very keen knowing Malaysia and Singapore have arrived at a consensus to carry out the project. Maybe, they see this as an

opportunity to help their company come to Malaysia," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said currently the tender had not been opened but was confident it would attract the interest of many parties.

"I heard China is also keen," he said.

In 2013, Singapore and Malaysia agreed to build a high speed train track by 2020 which would reduce the travel time between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to just 90 minutes compared to more than two hours now.

In November last year, Shinzo Abe had stated Japan's interest to take part in the international bidding process for the project to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak at a bilateral meeting between the two leaders on the sidelines of the 25th ASEAN Summit in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin said in the meeting with Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister also expressed Japan's interest in taking part in a coal-fired power plant project in Malaysia.

"I have informed that Malaysia needs more electricity in the long term. Japan can submit a proposal to quarters such as the Energy Commission," he said.

While in Sendai, Muhyidin also held a bilateral meeting with Japan's Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism Minister Akihiro Ota.

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