

Malaysia, Singapore Sign Bilateral Agreement on HSR
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PUTRAJAYA, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Singapore have inked a landmark bilateral agreement to pave the way for the implementation of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR), which will cut the travel time between the two cities to just 90 minutes.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the signing of the agreement during the 7th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat here on Tuesday.

The agreement, a follow-up to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by both countries on July 19, was signed by Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan and Singapore Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Transport Khaw Boon Wan.

The accord formalised the technical, safety and security as well as customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) arrangements concerning the HSR.

Najib at a joint press conference with Lee after the signing of the agreement said Malaysia and Singapore are committed to the project dateline in 2026.

"Looking at the size and complexity of the project, 10 years is a relatively short period of time, which means we need to work hard together and be very focused to overcome all challenges as we move ahead," he said.

The 350km-long rail line comprises eight stops in total -- Bandar Malaysia, Putrajaya, Seremban, Ayer Keroh, Muar, Batu Pahat, Iskandar Puteri and Singapore.

Najib said Malaysia and Singapore look forward to the appointment of a Joint Development Partner and the call for the systems tenders next year.

"In the fourth quarter of 2017, we also will issue the international tenders for the systems to be chosen for the HSR," he said.

On the challenges related to meeting the completion timeline and the estimated costs, Najib said the HSR project is a commercially viable project that is able to get long-term financing.

"We don't envisage a problem in getting long-term financing, in fact whoever wants to participate in this project can make available certain financial arrangements for us to consider as part of the package," he said.

Asked if the HSR would be extended to the nothern region, Najib said there is no plan for that as the focus now is to complete the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore rail line according to the time schedule and

budget.

Singapore's Lee said the HSR would transform the way Malaysia and Singapore interact, socialise and do business for the better.

"It's a long way to go and it is a complex project. We are making a long-term commitment but we have strong political will on both sides to ensure the project is done right and successfully.

"I look forward to taking the first train in 10 years' time," he said.

On the competition for the HSR project, Lee said he expected there would be competitive bids and Malaysia and Singapore would choose the best one.

A joint statement issued in the conjunction with the the 7th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat said a bilateral committee would be established to oversee all aspects of the project and all other matters set out in the agreement.

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