

# Singapore's High Speed Rail terminus will be located at Jurong East

The initial target of completion of the High Speed Rail project - which was the year 2020 - needs to be re-assessed due to the scale and complexity of the project, said the Prime Ministers of Singapore and Malaysia. No new time frame has been provided.

By Imelda Saad



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**SINGAPORE: The Republic's terminus for the 350km Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail will be located at Jurong East.**

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced this on Tuesday (May 5) after the Leaders' Retreat with his Malaysian counterpart Najib Razak.

Jurong East was chosen as it dovetails with Singapore's overall plans to transform the area into a second Central Business District, according to a statement.

Mr Lee said: "From the train's point of view, of course the city centre is the best. Then you go from city centre to city centre, then you arrive at the place that you want to be. But from the point of view of cost as well as engineering feasibility, it will be the hardest because it will bring a train all the way from Tuas into the city centre above ground, there's a lot of space left.

"Underground, frankly there's also not a lot of space left because underground in Singapore, anywhere you dig, you will find a cable or a tunnel or a pipe or somebody is going to put one there. And so it's very difficult.

"To put it in Tuas, it's (the) easiest but quite far away in the city centre and it's not a centre of activity and business as such. It's an industrial area. (There are) factories there, refineries, shipyards, but there's no business."

He added: "In Jurong East, you have business, you have population, you have a regional centre which is already developing and this will add to the regional centre, because it will make it a very attractive place and people will come in, you are there, at a place you want to be."

"And if you want to be somewhere else, rather than Jurong East ... Well, Jurong East is going to be connected to the rest of Singapore with three, four MRT lines in the long term."

Malaysia had earlier identified five terminus stations: Kuala Lumpur (at Bandar Malaysia), Seremban, Melaka, Muar, Batu Pahat, Nusajaya and the final stop in Singapore.

In a joint statement, both leaders noted "steady progress" on the High Speed Rail project and that agreements have been reached on the dual co-located Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) configuration, the frequency bands to be reserved for High Speed Rail operations, as well as on locating the depot and stabling facilities in Malaysia.

The High Speed Rail project, which was agreed upon in 2013, has been described by both leaders as a "game changer". It aims to cut down on travel time between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to just 90 minutes.

"You can go up to KL in a day, have lunch and return to Singapore or you come down to Singapore for a day, do business ... and go back to KL again," said Mr Lee.

The Prime Ministers also noted that the initial target of completion of the project - which was the year 2020 - needs to be re-assessed due to the scale and complexity of the project. No new time frame has been provided.

Both leaders said they hope to come to an agreement on the new date by the end of the year, and will give an updated timeline on when the trains will start running then. Mr Najib pointed out that construction will take five years, on top of one year for designing the project, and one year for the tender process.

Said Mr Najib: "I concur with what Prime Minister Lee said, our original deadline as we mentioned, was 2020. But realistically speaking, this project is a very complex project. There are many dimensions to it. It has to be studied very very carefully but expeditiously."

Mr Lee noted: "There are many engineering details which need to be worked out. How is the line going to be designed, there are many operational details which need to be worked out. Who is going to operate the company, how the company is going to be structured. Is it one company, multiple companies? One side, two sides?"

"There is also the financial issue to be solved, worked out. Which means where is the funding going to come from? Debt, equity, Government?"

He also noted: "How is it going to be divided between the two parties? There are also structuring issues to be worked out. For example, do we have Singapore build our part and Malaysia build your part and we join together in the middle? Or to have one company build both sides?"

"Do we have the same company operating the trains and owning the trains? Or we have the company owning the trains and somebody else operating. What happens to the tracks, how does that interface? What are the control arrangements? Where will the trains be controlled, and what are the arrangements in case of contingencies?"

Mr Lee added: "There are solutions to all these problems because there are other rail projects which cross borders and which involve more than one government. The Channel train from London to Paris. There are many other trains in Europe which cross borders.

"China to Hong Kong, there's a High Speed train going to come. So there are precedents, but there are issues which we need to work through and resolve and we have to discuss and apply our minds and decide what is best for our own circumstances and this takes some time."

"Hopefully, when our two governments can agree on a bilateral arrangement, as mentioned by Prime Minister Lee and if Singapore builds their side, as we build our side, hopefully the two lines will meet at some point," said Mr Najib, to which Mr Lee replied: "At the same point," inciting laughter from the audience.

Mr Najib continued: "At the same point, then we will get our high speed rail."

Both Malaysia and Singapore have been in active discussion on the technical, operational, security and other aspects of the High Speed Rail. Both leaders reaffirmed that both countries are fully committed to the success of the project.

They look forward to "further progress on this game-changing iconic project, which will boost connectivity, facilitate travel between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, enhance business linkages, and improve people-to-people ties", the leaders said in the joint statement.

"We are working hard at it. Papers have to be written and consensus reached, after considering all the relevant factors, to make sure that the project runs well. So I don't see them as insoluble problems. We are getting there. We just need a bit more time to work everything out," Mr Lee said.

#### **SINGAPORE-MALAYSIA RELATIONS MULTI-FACETED**

At the retreat, the leaders also touched on how both sides are working to reduce congestion at the two land checkpoints. Singapore is automating all motorcycle counters at the Woodlands and Tuas checkpoints by 2016.

In a **joint statement**, the leaders said this will help to speed up motorcycle immigration clearance by up to 30 per cent and reduce congestion for all checkpoint users, while Malaysia is studying the introduction of RFID stickers in passports for Malaysian motorcyclists to allow for faster clearance at the Causeway.

On the progress of the Rapid Transit System (RTS) linking Singapore and Johor Bahru, Mr Najib said both sides are hoping to move into Phase two of the project. "By the time we meet again, we will probably have resolved the RTS issue," he said.

Singapore has said that it will site its RTS terminus at Woodlands North Station, along the Thomson-East Coast MRT line.

Both sides also want to enhance economic integration. Singapore was Malaysia's second-largest trading partner in 2014. Total trade in 2014 was in the region of US\$60 billion (S\$80 billion).

Singapore is also Malaysia's second-largest source of foreign investment in 2014, with total investment reaching about USD\$2.23 billion.

"As leaders, we have given a very strong political signal with respect to the close ties we enjoy, and given the new premise between the two countries, a lot of things can happen. We would like to see greater economic integration between our two countries," said Mr Najib.

Other issues discussed include cooperation on water, with both sides reaffirming the importance of the completion of the Johor River Barrage, to ensure reliable water supply from the Johor River, as provided under the 1962 Water Agreement.

The project will see a barrage built on the Johor River to keep salt water intrusions during dry seasons. Mr Lee said this will "allow Singapore and Johor to draw the full capacity of the river even during dry seasons".

## **JURONG IS SET TO BE TRANSFORMED: PM LEE**

In a Facebook post on Tuesday evening, PM Lee said "Jurong is set to be transformed", and the High Speed Rail project will draw Singapore and Malaysia closer. "The terminus will stimulate developments all around it. Jurong East will become a second Central Business District," he wrote.

PM Lee added: "It was a good Retreat. Our bilateral ties are warm and we are working well together. Long may this continue."

**Source: CNA/eg/av/xk/dl**

**Read more at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-s-high-speed-rail-terminus-will-be-located-at-jurong-e-8265030>**