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NEW RAILWAY LINK

A comprehensive study is being carried out on establishing a railway link connecting Sabah's west coast with northern Kudat and eastern Sandakan, TheStar online reported in March 2017.

Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan was quoted as saying that the Federal Government allocated RM1mil for the study which could bring about the expansion of the current 137km Sabah State Railway line.

"We are targeting to do it (expanding the rail links) but this will depend on the study," Pairin said when launching new Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) railcars belonging to SSR at the Tanjung Aru Station near Kota Kinabalu.

(Malaysia's Minister of Transport Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai announced in Kota Kinabalu in 2015 that RM400 million has been set aside for expanding Sabah's rail links to Sandakan, Kudat and Tawau.)

Sabah's existing railway line, the only one passenger railway in Borneo and established by the British colonial administration, now links Kota Kinabalu, south-western Beaufort and the interior Tenom district.

Pairin said the aim was to provide alternative transport facilities for the people of Sabah

"We are committed to expanding our railway lines to Sandakan and Kudat," he said, adding that the study would

also look at suitable types of trains.

The study would also look at upgrading communication systems to ensure safer rail journeys.

Pairin said the three DMU trains, costing RM7.62mil, were from India and could accommodate 192 passengers. These would service the Tanjung Aru-Beaufort-Tenom route.

About 495,000 passengers travelled on the railway last year. The rail service was also improving with the number of cancellations due to weather or technical problems reduced from 762 in 2015 to 134 last year.