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Beijing-Shanghai rail project approved

(chinadaily.com.cn/agencies)

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China has given final approval for the much-anticipated high-speed rail link between Beijing and Shanghai, welcoming foreign investment in the hugely expensive project.

The State Council, or cabinet, gave the go-ahead to the colossal engineering undertaking recently, the National Development and Reform Commission said in a statement on its website.



The maglev rail line in Shanghai. [newsphoto/file]

"It will help relieve the seriously strained train link between Beijing and Shanghai," said the commission, the nation's top planning agency. "The time is ripe for construction."

According to the statement, a special company will be established to oversee the construction. It did not indicate when construction would start.

"We will actively explore various financing methods and attract private capital as well as capital from legal persons and foreign investment," the statement said.

The express railway, designed for speeds of up to 350 kilometers (220 miles) per hour, will stretch over 1,320 kilometers, the statement said. Earlier reports said the new line was expected to shorten travel time between the two cities from 13 hours to less than five.

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Last week, minister of railways Liu Zhijun said his ministry had decided to use domestic technology instead of international firms to construct the rail link. German, French and Japanese companies had vied for the deal.

The 200-billion-yuan (24.7-billion-dollar) project was first proposed in 1994 and was originally supposed to be completed before the 2008 Olympics but disputes over what technology to use delayed construction.

Shanghai-Hangzhou maglev approved

The commission also said that the State Council has given the green light to a high-speed magnetic levitation train line between the eastern cities of Shanghai and Hangzhou.

The National Development and Reform Commission said on its Web site (www.ndrc.gov.cn) that the maglev line would help ease transportation strains between the two cities.

A member of the National People's Congress said last week that the project would cost 35 billion yuan (US\$4.3 billion) and use German technology that levitates a train above a magnetic track, allowing it to speed at 430 km an hour (270 mph), the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Transrapid, which groups ThyssenKrupp, Siemens A.G. and the German government, already operates such a line in Shanghai.

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