

China to start construction on 35 railway projects

It is full steam ahead for China's railway sector as construction on 35 new railway projects will start in 2017 as the country plans to expand the network, according to a recent report in Xinhua-run Economic Information Daily.

Construction will begin on 2,100 km of new rail line, 2,500 km of double-track lines and 4,000 km of electrified railways this year, the report cited unnamed authorities as saying.

To achieve the targets, China Railway Corp. (CRC) has been assigned a budget of 800 billion yuan (116.8 billion U.S. dollars) by the central government, the same as in 2016.

The vice minister of transport, Yang Yudong, disclosed earlier that China will spend 3.5 trillion yuan on railway construction during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020).

By 2020, China will have increased the length of high-speed railways in operation to 30,000 kilometers, connecting more than 80 percent of its big cities.

By the end of 2016, China had a 124,000 km railway network, featuring the world's largest high-speed rail network of more than 22,000 km.

While the vast network has enhanced connectivity in large swathes of the country, construction lags behind in the less developed western regions. The government wants to address this gap.

Much of this year's construction projects will happen in China's central and western regions, to support the wider poverty-relief campaign, according to CRC.