

ECRL progress at 15pc, to be completed by mid-2026, says Loke

PORT KLANG: The shortened East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), which was relaunched last year, has reached a progress rate of 15 per cent. Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the project was expected to be fully completed by mid-2026 and operational by early 2027. "Construction work in Section B (Dungun to Temerloh) started last year and is ongoing. Sections A (Kota Baru to Dungun) and C are still in the exhibition stage, but they will not wait for all new exhibitions to be completed. "Public exhibition is ongoing in Section C (Temerloh to Port Klang), which will end in April. "Once approval is obtained in the third quarter of this year, construction works on areas not involved in the land acquisition process will begin first. Works on areas that require land acquisition will take time." Loke said this after attending the ECRL project public inspection site at the Port Klang Authority Headquarters here yesterday. Present were Malaysian Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL) chairman Tan Sri Ismail Bakar and MRL chief executive officer Datuk Seri Darwis Abd Razak.

Loke said although land acquisition was needed in certain areas, the authorities will try to avoid residential areas. "There will be areas where there may be a small number of houses that need to be evacuated. The process of acquiring the land areas falls under the National Land Code. Those affected will be duly compensated. "The project in Putrajaya and Selangor involves 81 lots and 1,538 lots, respectively. However, this only affects the wider land areas." Loke said the ECRL would also connect two ports in Port Klang - Westport and Carey Island Port to be built in the future.

He said the ECRL project was not affected by the Covid-19 outbreak and that the was on schedule as only 13 of the ECRL workers were from China's Hubei province, of which its capital, Wuhan, is the outbreak's epicentre. "They had returned home for the Chinese New Year and had not returned to Malaysia. They are still on vacation in China since the area is now on lockdown. "This, however, does not have any impact on the work here. Construction work is largely carried out by local workers."

On April 12, 2019, in Beijing, MRL and China Communications Construction Company Ltd signed a supplementary agreement that resumed the suspended ECRL project at a lower price. The new is shortened by 40km from 688km to 648km, as it no longer tunnels through the Titiwangsa Main Range that borders Selangor and Pahang. It starts from Kota Bahru in Kelantan and runs south through Mentakab, Jelebu, Kuala Kelawang, Bangi/Kajang and Putrajaya terminating at Port Klang. The ECRL project cost was slashed to RM44 billion, RM21.5 billion cheaper than its original cost of RM65.5 billion, which was signed on by former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak in October 2016.