

ECRL relaunch on July 25

KUALA LUMPUR: The shortened East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) will be relaunched this month and local contractors can bid for the 40 per cent civil works portion of the project, said Transport Minister Anthony Loke. "The ECRL project relaunch date is set for July 25. Yes, I can confirm that 40 per cent of the project will be for local contractors," he said. "We also invite companies to embark on transit-oriented development along the realigned ECRL corridor," said Loke after officiating at the opening of the "Women in Rail" conference, here, yesterday.

Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL) and China Communications Construction Co Ltd (CCCC) had signed a supplementary agreement to resume the suspended ECRL project at a lower price in Beijing on April 12. At the signing ceremony, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the ECRL project cost had also been slashed by RM21.5 billion to RM44 billion. He had also assured that Malaysian contractors' participation in the civil works portion of the ECRL project would be raised to 40 per cent compared with 30 per cent previously. The new ECRL alignment has been shortened by 40km to 648km and it would no longer tunnel through the Titiwangsa main range that borders Selangor and Pahang. It will start from Kota Bahru and run south through Mentakab, Jelebu, Kuala Kelawang, Bangi/Kajang and Putrajaya before terminating at Port Klang.

Earlier, Loke said he planned to pool resources to have a dedicated academy for skills training development related to rail transport industries. "We have Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd running the national rail network, Prasarana operating mainly the urban metro and buses, Agensi Pengangkutan Awam Darat as the regulator and Express Rail Link (ERL) as a private company running the airport express. In the future, we will have MRL operate the ECRL. "We plan to consolidate all the training resources into a Centre of Excellence. "We are looking at upgrading the training facility in Batu Gajah," said Loke.

Meanwhile, Malaysia and Singapore had also agreed to reach a decision by September 30 on cutting the Rapid Transit System (RTS) project cost from an estimated RM4 billion. The 4km RTS, which is designed to ferry 10,000 passengers an hour, will link Woodlands North station on Singapore's Thomson-East Coast MRT line to Bukit Chagar in Johor Baru. "We hope to announce the good news on the RTS before the deadline," said Loke.