

## **ECRL - first tunnel breakthrough six months ahead of schedule**

**Malaysiakini**

**10 April 2021**

**Bernama**

The East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) managed to achieve its first tunnel breakthrough six months ahead of schedule, said Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL) chairperson Mohd Zuki Ali.

He said the tunnelling works at the Paka Tunnel were done quickly and efficiently, despite challenges faced during the construction period including the renegotiation between Malaysia and China governments, and the nine-month delay due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

“The achievement is the result of 620,000 working hours with the implementation of the drill and blast methods.

“The blasting activities were carried out by local explosive experts who work under ECRL main contractor, China Communications Construction (ECRL) Sdn Bhd (CCC-ECRL),” he told reporters at the breakthrough ceremony in Dungun,

Terengganu.

According to Mohd Zuki, the Paka Tunnel was built to avoid logging and to preserve the forest reserve areas.

The excavation works started from the tunnel's entrance (north portal) in April 2018, however, the construction was stopped in July 2018 due to the suspension of ECRL project for the renegotiation between the two governments, and it was continued in August 2019 after the project was relaunched in July 25, 2019.

Mohd Zuki, who is also chief secretary to the government, said the excellent work progress was due to the commitment of about 100 ECRL personnel.

All other related tunnel civil works are expected to be fully completed by the first quarter of 2022, he said.

"Today's tunnel breakthrough is a result of mutual assistance and collaboration between MRL and CCC-ECRL that put into practice top-notch technology, equipment, planning, and safety aspects in tunnel engineering and construction.

"The involvement of local workers in the tunnel construction is also something that we are proud of, their experience will be utilised for the construction of

more tunnels in the future,” he said.

Mohd Zuki added that there are 59 tunnels in the ECRL project.

Spanning a total of 665km, the ECRL will connect east coast states namely Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, with Klang Valley on the west coast.

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Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/570159>