

China's experts hope M'sia can complete ECRL faster

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Experts from China hope Malaysia can complete the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project quickly and become the second country in Southeast Asia to acquire high-speed trains after Indonesia.

Beijing-based Centre for China and Globalisation vice-president Victor Gao said apart from an earlier completion, it was also possible for the ECRL train speed to be increased from 160kph to 351kph.

“Hopefully, it (ECRL train) will be faster. It will be 351kph rather than that of the Indonesian high-speed railway (HSR) at 350kph.

“Malaysia can have an advantage of one hour extra,” he told the media after Concorde Club’s forum discussion on the ‘Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Asean’ in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Also present was Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) chairperson Wong Chun Wai.

On Oct 17, the Indonesian HSR, which connects its capital city Jakarta and West Java's provincial capital Bandung, was officially launched, operating at a maximum design speed of 350kph.

The HSR operation not only marks Indonesia entering the modern transportation system but also indicates China and Indonesia have achieved a milestone outcome under BRI.

Meanwhile, Renmin University of China's researcher, Director of the Department of Research Cooperation, Liu Ying, believes the ECRL project is another BRI project which can boost Malaysia's economic growth by about three to five percent.

"I think it can make the Asean economy grow more. Maybe it's a new road for Asia to China and also the China-Indonesia economic corridor," she said.

According to the Malaysia Rail Link website, the 648km ECRL will traverse the east coast states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang before linking the Klang Valley on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

It said at speeds of up to 160kph, the ECRL passenger trains will significantly cut travel time from Kota Bharu to the Integrated Transport Terminal-Gombak (ITT-Gombak) to approximately four hours.

On Sept 19, Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook told the Dewan Rakyat the ECRL project had reached 52.9 percent completion and was on track to be completed by 2027.

Loke added that the ECRL line from Kota Bharu to Gombak was set to be completed on Dec 31, 2026, while the Gombak to Port Klang stretch was scheduled for completion by Dec 31, 2027.

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