

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	09 MARCH 2017

'IT'LL BENEFIT PEOPLE GREATLY'

Project has nothing to do with selling our sovereignty, says PM

ARFA YUNUS
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

DATUK Seri Najib Razak yesterday again took aim at detractors who claimed that the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project is tantamount to selling the country's sovereignty.

The prime minister said while he was aware of such sentiments, he stressed that the project would benefit the people.

"Some quarters criticised the effort, saying that we are selling the country's sovereignty.

"I'm sure everyone understands that this project has nothing to do with our sovereignty.

"This project is for the people, for their comfort and also for the country's growth.

"Just like how we cooperate with China and Saudi Arabia. It's for the country's benefit," he said.

Najib said this at the opening of the first Public Inspection session for the ECRL project at the Land Public Transport Commission headquarters here yesterday.

"It's difficult to comprehend why a project which will benefit the country, especially the east coast states, and which can be a game changer and improve the people's lifestyle, can attract detractors who criticise this effort



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak viewing the ECRL project plan at the Land Public Transport Commission headquarters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan (second from right) and Land Public Transport Commission chairman Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar (right). PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

and accuse the government of selling the country's sovereignty," he said.

Najib said the gross domestic product (GDP) of three east coast states was projected to grow by 1.5 per cent with the implementation of the ECRL.

He added that the project would change the economic landscapes of Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang, by turning them into trade hubs and tourism destinations, thus stimulating small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and attracting investments.

Najib said the ECRL project was crucial in closing the development gap between the east

and west coast.

"ECRL is a game changer that could spur higher growth for the east coast states," he said.

Najib said the states had huge potential for development, especially in agriculture, commerce, industries, SMEs and tourism.

"Besides being environmentally-friendly, the ECRL will facilitate the movement of people during the festive seasons.

"The train journey from Gombak in Kuala Lumpur to Wakaf Bharu in Kelantan would take a mere four hours," he said.

ECRL is part of the East Coast Economic Plan to achieve equitable growth and development

between the east and west coast of peninsular Malaysia.

The planned construction of the rail link, slated to start in July and end in June 2024, is expected to bring improved connectivity and mobility to the people of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and the Klang Valley.

The plan for the 600.3km rail project, which will have 23 stations, was opened for public viewing for three months yesterday.

The public can also view the plan at 38 other locations, district offices in Kota Baru, Tumpat, Kuala Terengganu, Besut, Kuantan and Temerloh.