

Dr M: Final decision on ECRL project yet to be made

PETALING JAYA: No final decision has been made with regards to the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) as negotiations are still underway, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said some decisions were made but the government was looking to find a better solution.

"We are still negotiating. We feel that we should give time to both sides (Malaysia and China) to come up with a solution to the problem.

"There may be other options – we are open," he said after chairing the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia supreme council meeting here last night.

Earlier in Putrajaya, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was seeking understanding from all parties as the government has to cut back some of

the expenditure incurred by the previous administration.

"It is not because we don't want to honour our contract or we just want to frustrate or throw out the contract. It is because we are really tight in terms of finance. We just cannot pay.

"This contract may cost us more than RM100bil. It will impoverish us. So, we seek the understanding of the parties concerned," he said after launching the National Anti-Corruption Plan.

It has been reported that the government is looking for a new contractor after terminating the contract awarded to China Communications Construction Company Ltd to build the RM81bil mega rail.

Asked if Malaysia would have to pay a large sum of compensation

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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

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should the project be scrapped, Dr Mahathir said it would cost more to proceed with the ECRL project.

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When pressed on the issue of contradicting statements by his ministers on the status of ECRL project, the Prime Minister acknowledged there were mistakes made but it would be corrected accordingly.

"Sometimes some ministers made announcement before it is due. I admit some mistakes were made but we are going to correct it. We seek your understanding," he said.

Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali had said the Cabinet decided to cancel the project as the country could not afford the RM500mil annual interest on the project, to which, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said he was shocked by the statement and said that Azmin was not privy to the Prime Minister's intention.

Lim had also said the official

announcement on ECRL would be made in a written statement and issued this week.

But at a press conference after launching the Bank Negara Malaysia's Fund for Affordable Homes and Rumahku portal yesterday, Lim said he had been advised by Dr Mahathir to refrain from making any announcement pertaining to project for now.

"I have met with the Prime Minister and he has suggested that I do not make any statement for the time being.

"So, wait for the statement," he said.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

