



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says the East Coast Rail Link project has involved more than 2,100 Malaysian companies since it began in 2017. PIC BY NIK ABDULLAH NIK OMAR

LACK OF FOCUS ON PORTS

PM: ECRL MUST BE A BOON FOR EAST COAST

Thorough planning needed to ensure it is an agent of change, especially to Kelantan

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wants thorough planning to ensure the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project, set to be completed in three years, will be an agent of change in the east coast, especially Kelantan.

He said based on the government's discussions with investors, including those from China, major issues with the project include a lack of attention to Terengganu and Kelantan on ports.

"There is no port (when the ECRL project is completed) to facilitate, for example, the transport of Kelantan-made products, both agricultural and industrial.

"This is why more aggressive action is needed to attract more investors by guaranteeing new incentives and a speedier approval process," he said at the launch of the state's first ECRL station in Tunjong here yesterday.

Present were Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob and Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Dar-

wis Abdul Razak.

The Kota Baru ECRL station, built for residents of the 20ha Bandar Baru Tunjong, has a traditional Kelantanese Malay design.

The Tunjong station is one of the more than 20 stations that would be constructed for the project, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2026 and begin operation in January 2027.

Anwar said the ECRL project involved more than 2,100 Malaysian companies, from contractors to suppliers, since it began in 2017 to the first quarter of this year.

"The perception that the ECRL project is monopolised by China is not true.

"I have said before that in our negotiations with China and the companies involved, we want all new projects to involve local companies for civil work, contractors and consultants."

Anwar thanked the Kelantan government for giving its full cooperation in the ECRL project's development.

He said the federal government had never neglected any state in its national development agenda.

"The federal government will continue to give allocations for development projects that we believe can help the state government and the people."

Earlier, Anwar announced a federal allocation of RM103.86 million for imam, bilal, siak, takmir and Kafa (Quran and Fardu Ain) teachers in Kelantan this year.

A total of 1,170 imam will receive RM11.9 million, 341 takmir teachers will receive RM3.68 mil-

lion and 5,470 Kafa teachers will receive RM82.79 million.

"The one-off RM600 payment will continue this year for imam, bilal, siak and takmir teachers, involving 2,605 recipients and an allocation of RM1.56 million," he said during his speech at the 2023 Kelantan-level Ulama and Umara Madani programme at the Sultan Ismail Petra Silver Jubilee Islamic Complex in Panji yesterday.

He said the government's contribution of RM232.80 per person under the Social Security Organisation's Self-Employment Injury Scheme would be continued for Kelantan imam, bilal, siak and takmir teachers, involving 2,605 recipients and an allocation of RM606,444.

"The government wants Islamic agencies to be the best examples of management and governance efficiency. This is the challenge we must take up together, not only at the federal level, but also at the states' level.

"For instance, we must stress the financial management and governance of Islamic affairs. We don't want to be involved in any misconduct."

He said through the Federal Territories Islamic Religious Council's Yayasan Taqwa, the government had channelled RM2.65 million in aid to the Kelantan state disaster assistance fund.

"This includes RM829,225 to build new homes, RM1.53 million to repair homes, RM278,700 to repair mosques and surau and RM10,000 to repair educational institutions."