

'ECRL must bring change'

Line should act as catalyst in East Coast region, says PM

KOTA BARU: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says there must be thorough planning to ensure the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) will be a catalyst for change in the East Coast region, especially Kelantan.

"This is because among the major issues during our discussions with investors, including those from China, is the lack of attention given to Terengganu, and especially Kelantan.

"On the issue of ports, even though there is no port (when the ECRL is completed) there should be avenues to facilitate, for example, the transportation of goods in

Kelantan, whether agricultural or industrial.

"That is why there should be more aggressive and immediate action to attract investors by guaranteeing new incentives and faster approval process," he said at the construction launch ceremony of the first ECRL station here yesterday.

Also present were Transport Minister Anthony Loke and Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob.

The Kota Baru ECRL station is built on an area spanning some 20ha in Bandar Baru Tunjong, with its building design based on

the concept of the Rumah Meleh Melayu Kelantan, the Ketam Guri flower and the state's cultural characteristics.

Anwar said the ECRL project had seen the involvement of more than 2,100 local companies consisting of contractors, consultants and suppliers since 2017 until the first quarter of this year.

"So the assumption that the project is completely monopolised by China is not entirely true.

"I mentioned earlier that in our negotiations with China and companies, the emphasis is that opportunities for all new projects and civil work, contracts, consul-

tancy and others should be given to local companies," he said of the project that is expected to begin operations in January 2027.

Loke said his ministry will discuss with stakeholders to ensure that passenger fares will be affordable to all Malaysians.

"All parties are accountable to ensure the national infrastructure can be enjoyed by all," he said during his speech at the same event.

"Of course, fares will be based on the Rahmah concept so that it is affordable. We will make sure it won't be burdensome," he said, adding that the fares had yet to be decided at this point.