

LINK TO THAI BORDER

'Early talks on extending ECRL to Rantau Panjang'

BEIJING: A proposal to extend the East Coast Rail Link to Rantau Panjang at the Thai border is still in the initial discussion stage, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking to Malaysian media at the end of his four-day visit to China yesterday, Anwar said he hoped the plan would materialise as it would spur development in the area.

"Currently, the line ends in Kota Baru.

"We feel it would be best if it could extend all the way to the Thailand border, adding 25km to reach Rantau Panjang.

"The area from Kota Baru to Rantau Panjang is still underdeveloped. We hope that by having this and setting up stations there,

the development ecosystem and business activities will improve.

"This is still at the initial discussion stage. The team will have to follow through with the details, costing and payment model. Because it is a continuation, the cost will probably be much lower."

Last month, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, commenting on the possible ECRL extension to Rantau Panjang, said his ministry was preparing a memorandum of understanding on cross-border transport between Malaysia and Thailand.

Further discussions with China and main contractor China Communications Construction Co Ltd are needed as the project is still under construction.