

ECRL extension talks underway

PM says Rantau Panjang area would get much needed development boost

BEIJING: The proposal to extend the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) to Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, is still in the initial discussion stage, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The team will have to follow through with the details, costing and payment mode. Because it is a continuation, the cost will probably be much less," he told the Malaysian media in a news conference before concluding his four-day visit to China.

Anwar said the matter was also discussed with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang in separate bilateral meetings on Monday.

"The proposal is towards that direction, between 20km and 25km to Rantau Panjang,

near the Thai border," he said, Bernama reported.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, hopes the proposal can be realised in the government's efforts to develop the area.

"The area from Kota Baru to Rantau Panjang, especially Rantau Panjang, is a bit underdeveloped.

"We hope that with this and a station there, the development and business ecosystem can be improved," he said.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke told the Dewan Rakyat last month that farther discussions with China and main contractor China Communications Construction Co Ltd (CCCC) were needed because the project was currently under construction and

the alignment to Rantau Panjang would be part of the overall package.

On another development, Anwar confirmed that Li will represent China at the 47th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur at the end of October.

Meanwhile, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said business meetings in Beijing had overall secured RM905mil of potential investments, particularly in the chemical and telecommunication sectors.

Malaysia has secured RM108mil in potential exports via China's one-stop e-commerce platform JD.com.

"We also met with the China Semiconductor Industrial

Association's (CSIA) representatives and had discussions with the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade).

"This has resulted in an export potential of RM2.2bil over the next one to two years.

"Furthermore, semiconductor trade between Malaysia and China is on the rise," he said.

Besides the CSIA, Anwar also held high-level business engagements with top Chinese companies during his working visit which began in Tianjin on Aug 31.

This included Rianlon Corporation, a leading Chinese conglomerate in anti-ageing additives for polymers and cosmetics, which resulted in the company pledging a commitment to

invest RM820mil to develop a research and development centre in Johor.

Anwar also held talks with CCCC and discussed the development of ECRL.

His meeting with JD.com in Beijing attracted the leading Chinese e-commerce and logistics retailer's interest to expand in Malaysia, with the Prime Minister adding that JD.com also intends to buy more Malaysian products to market in China.

During a business dialogue with 120 Chinese leaders from various sectors, Anwar promoted Malaysia as a regional hub for business, highlighting the country's clear economic policies, strategic infrastructure and stable environment as key advantages.