

ECRL back on track, alignment shortened by 40km

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From Amirul Mohd Sajadi

BEIJING, April 12 (Bernama) -- The East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project is back on track, with its new alignment shortened by 40 kilometres (km) from 688km to 648km, the Prime Minister's special envoy Tun Daim Zainuddin said.

He said however, the double track is still maintained as in the original agreement.

Daim, who is also Council of Eminent Persons chairman, said the new deal saw the costs reduced from RM98 million to RM68 million per km.

"Several stations are scrapped from the construction. They include Gombak, but the new alignment will have a new station in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan," he told the Malaysian media at the Malaysian Embassy here Friday.

Earlier, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) announced that the construction cost for Phases 1 and 2 of the ECRL has now been slashed to RM44 billion, a reduction of RM21.5 billion from its original cost of RM65.5 billion.

It said this followed the signing of a supplementary agreement between Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd and China Communications Construction Company Ltd.

The project was initiated by the previous Barisan Nasional government and was suspended last year by the newly-elected Pakatan Harapan government due to its high cost.



Daim Zainuddin

The ECRL will link Port Klang in Selangor to Pengkalan Kubor in Kelantan.

Daim said the new alignment will be Kota Bharu-Mentakab, Jelebu, Kuala Kelawang, Bangi/Kajang, Putrajaya-Port Klang.

The ECRL supplementary agreement, which was negotiated since July last year, was signed here at 11am local time Friday.

Daim said the ECRL construction will resume as soon as possible.

Asked whether the loan interest will be reduced, he said the details of the agreement will be announced by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a media briefing on Monday.

"In general, the amount will reduce as a result lower amount of new loans," he said.

Daim believes the new agreement will further deepen Malaysia-China ties that have entered the 45th year.

"We believe this creates a renewed confidence among Chinese investors to continue investing in Malaysia," he said.

Asked whether this morning's meeting also discussed China's interest in buying Malaysia's palm oil, he said the negotiation focused on the ECRL and did not touch any other issues.

"I am tasked with finalising the ECRL project. On other matters, you have to ask the Prime Minister himself," he said.

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