

# Rail link a huge economic boost

ECRL project set to create over 86,000 jobs and promote businesses along its route

**KUANTAN:** The economic impact of the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) is huge and critics who say it is not feasible are wrong.

"There will be a multiplier effect. When there are more business people, we can get more taxes and government revenue will increase," Malaysia Rail Link (MRL) chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah said.

He said critics must also look at the development that would take place alongside the ECRL in the long run.

China Communications Construction Group chairman Liu Qitao said the ECRL project was of great economic significance.

"It will promote social development and improve the living standards of those along the railway line, especially in the east coast," he said.

Liu said that the rail link was also expected to generate more than 80,000 jobs for Malaysians during its construction period.

Another 6,000 jobs will be created during

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the rail's operation and the Chinese government will also train more than 3,000 Malaysian students.

A total of 3,600 graduates will be trained in rail technology through the ECRL Industrial Skills Training (PLKI-ECRL) programme.

Its chief coordinator Prof Dr Rizalman Mamat said about 1,000 applications had already been received as of yesterday.

"The first intake of 50 participants will begin in September with the next intake of 250 scheduled in December.

The next batch of 700 trainees will be in April next year.

"The programme will be focused specifically on the socio-economic development of the east coast but this does not mean those in the west coast cannot take part.

Dr Rizalman said the training was open to graduates who majored in civil engineering, mechanical engineering and electrical engineering.

He added that **Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)** had been appointed as the focal university for the implementation of the programme, with cooperation from Beijing Jiaotong University and Southwest Jiaotong University and other institutions of higher

learning in Malaysia.

He said railway technology was developing rapidly and the programme was a stepping stone for UMP to develop rail engineering in the future.

The training under the programme will take four to six months, said Dr Rizalman.

China state councillor Wang Yong said ECRL was a landmark project for China and Malaysia.

"The team from our two sides have had productive cooperation. This is a full demonstration of the friendship between China and Malaysia and its efficiency," said Wang.

MRL project director Yew Yow Boo said the railway would have 88.8km of viaducts mostly in Kelantan and Terengganu to bypass flood-prone areas.

Yew said the first phase would have a total length of 49km of tunnels at 19 locations with the longest being 17.9km connecting Bukit Tinggi and Gombak.