

ECRL PROJECT GETS GREENLIGHT FOR KOTA BHARU-DUNGUN REALIGNMENT

Kuala Lumpur, 18 May: The Federal Government has provided its final approval to the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project's Railway Scheme for Section A, paving the way for construction works on the 210.4-km realignment from Kota Bharu, Kelantan to Dungun, Terengganu to commence soon.

Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL), the project and asset owner of the ECRL, said it received a letter from the Land Public Transport Agency (APAD) dated 14 May 2020 which highlighted that the proposed realignment to the ECRL Railway Scheme for Section A was approved by the Minister of Transport recently.

MRL said the approval to the ECRL Railway Scheme for Section A would include among others the final alignment route, location of passenger/freight stations, and the number of lots to be under land acquisition for the Kota Bharu-Dungun stretch. In addition, a 14.4 km future spurline is expected to link the ECRL mainline in Kelantan with the port of Tok Bali.

"The ECRL will now have six stations under Section A consisting of Kota Bharu and Pasir Puteh in Kelantan as well Jerteh, Bandar Permaisuri, Kuala Terengganu, and Dungun in Terengganu," MRL said in a statement today.

According to MRL, a total of 2,974 feedback from respondents were received during the 3-month ECRL Public Inspection for Section A, of which an overwhelming 98 percent or 2,914 respondents supported the Kota Bharu-Dungun alignment. The remaining 2 percent or 60 respondents whom objected were mainly land or house owners whose properties had to be acquired to make way for the project.

MRL Chairman Tan Sri Dr Ismail Bin Haji Bakar said the company is pleased to receive the Federal Government's approval for the ECRL Railway Scheme for Section A, thus auguring well with the project's time frame of ensuring preparatory works and earthworks for the Kota-Bharu-Dungun stretch to kick off by mid-2020.

"We are also grateful with the amount of support from the local populace for the ECRL realignment from Kota Bharu to Dungun. With such confidence level, the ECRL base camps coupled with its technical team and workers in Section A are all geared up to deliver this section of the rail alignment," he noted.

Ismail added that the ECRL Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) report for Section A as well as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report for Section A have also received approvals recently. Meanwhile, the Section A Social Impact Assessment (SIA) report is awaiting approval from the relevant authority.

The 640-km ECRL project is divided into three sections namely Section A (Kota Bharu-Dungun), Section B (Dungun-Mentakab), and Section C (Mentakab-Port Klang). The rail infrastructure will traverse the East Coast states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang before linking with Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, and WP Putrajaya .

On the progress of the ECRL, Ismail said the project’s overall completion rate currently stood at 16 percent, noting that certain construction works such as those involving tunnels and viaducts have since resumed in Section B for several weeks. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) had in mid-April 2020 approved the application by ECRL’s main contractor, China Communications Construction (ECRL) Sdn Bhd, to operate during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period.

“We view the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the progress of the ECRL project to be minimal at this stage considering that construction works are already back on track,” he said adding that the project’s progress was slightly ahead of schedule when the MCO was implemented on 18 March 2020.

MRL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Minister of Finance Incorporated, is the project and asset owner of the ECRL. Scheduled for completion by December 2026, the ECRL will cut travel time and expected to link Kota Bharu with WP Putrajaya in approximately 4 hours.

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