

## KERATAN AKHBAR

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### Railways essential for economy



*Supporting advancement: Dr Wee (second from left) visiting the exhibits after officiating the third Symposium of Railway Infrastructure and Engineering at UTAR Sungai Long campus. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star*

**KAJANG:** Malaysia's railway development is essential for the country's economic development, and there is potential for railways to do even more, says Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

The Transport Minister said there are good reasons why the government embarked on initiatives such as the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), Rapid Transit System Link (RTS Link from Johor Baru to Woodlands), MRT3, and the expansion of Malaysia's rail network throughout the country.

"Rail transport already plays a vital role in supporting the people, developing Malaysia's economy, and protecting our green environment. It has the potential to contribute much more.

“This is recognised in the National Transport Policy, which identifies rail as a major driver in developing the strategic objective of smart green and sustainable growth,” he said while opening the third Symposium on Railway Infrastructure and Engineering (SRIE 2022) at the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman’s (UTAR) Sungai Long campus here yesterday.

While a combination of public and private participation provides excellent synergy for publicly promoted services and commercial travel and logistics, he said rail is in a privileged position to become the backbone of an intermodal “mobility as a service” for passengers and “delivery as a service” for goods.

“Various initiatives have been taken under my purview to enhance the operational side of the railway aiming at delivering the best rail experience to the people as the main stakeholder.”

Through digitalisation, automation and material science, Dr Wee noted that the latest advances in technology provide a great opportunity to change lives and create a better Malaysia to live in.

“To capitalise on these advances, railways must invest in research and development alongside partner transport modes.

“Rail and all the transport modes must work together to create a seamless transport journey for passengers and freight companies.”

The government, he added, remains committed to offering continuous support and investment to embrace the technological opportunities and streamlined regulation to improve the cost competitiveness of the Malaysian railway industry.

Given the expanding railway sector in Malaysia, Dr Wee said the symposium was a good platform for research and development opportunities between educational institutions and the industry to fortify the progress of railway development across the region.

“The symposium is timely as UTAR’s Centre for Railway Infrastructure and Engineering (CRIE) aims to promote and expand the technology and human capital development of railway infrastructure and engineering in Malaysia.

“CRIE will work with other Malaysian government organisations, railway operators and industry players to promote interdisciplinary research in railway infrastructure, engineering, socio-economics, education, training and service.

“I am excited as this symposium will provide a glimpse into the rail capabilities needed to meet the future needs of the railway sector in this country and, hopefully, explore many routes to apply new technologies to achieve these capabilities,” he said.

Dr Wee also called for everyone to appreciate the rail sector in terms of its economic, societal, and environmental contributions.

“The challenges and opportunities it faces arising from societal changes and other trends will shape the state of Malaysian railway.

“Therefore, we must take advantage of opportunities to innovate and reap the bigger contribution it could make.

“SRIE must identify the key enablers and a range of mechanisms central to the delivery of this vision, including the critical need for continual and enhanced support for research and development,” he added.