

POINT TO POINT

## 'HSR WILL ENHANCE CITY LINKAGES'

Experts say it offers efficient alternative to business travellers, fosters regional trade

KUALA LUMPUR

THE proposed revival of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore high-speed rail (KL-Singapore HSR) project would enhance land connectivity between the two cities, which has one of the busiest flight routes in the world.

Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs economist and assistant research manager Doris Liew said the HSR would cut travel time for business travellers, especially between Johor and Singapore.

"We know that Kuala Lumpur

International Airport is far from the city centre. It takes an hour to travel to the city centre, whereas the HSR reduces the overall travel time to 90 minutes, point to point, city to city," she said.

The project will have seven stations in Malaysia — Bandar Malaysia, Sepang-Putrajaya, Seremban, Melaka, Muar, Batu Pahat and Iskandar Puteri — before reaching its last destination in Jurong East, Singapore.

"The Johor-Singapore Causeway and land checkpoints are heavily congested, often at full capacity, with trips between Johor Baru and Singapore taking

anywhere from two to six hours one way.

"For business travellers, wasting time stuck in traffic is not an option, making HSR an efficient solution," Liew added.

Taylor's University senior lecturer at the School of Accounting Finance Paul Anthony Maria Das said one of the benefits of the project was enhanced connectivity between Malaysia and Singapore.

He said the reduction in travel time would facilitate the seamless movement of people and goods between the two nations, fostering regional trade and investment.

"The development would bring notable social benefits. Improved connectivity will strengthen the economic and

cultural ties between Malaysia and Singapore, fostering regional integration.

"This would encourage greater mobility, offering individuals enhanced access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities."

Observers suggested that the project should be developed under the cooperation of the government and the private sector rather than solely relying on the full participation of private entities.

Liew said public-private partnership (PPP) would be a good way for the government to control and guarantee that the project was viable and sustainable in the long run.

She said it was risky for the project to be a solely private ini-

tiative due to the significant investment involved, and its success also depended on the private entities' survivability.

The project, first proposed in 2013, is estimated to cost RM100 billion.

Moody's Analytics head of Asia-Pacific Economics Katrina Ell said greater city linkages had significant benefits, including improved labour mobility, which can spill over to social benefits via increased employment opportunities for Malaysians.

"There can boost service exports, including tourism, as transport becomes easier," she said.

Das also said a well-structured PPP model would ensure financial sustainability while delivering public value.