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RHB ISLAMIC TRANSFORMS ASNAF YOUTH INTO ECRL ASSISTANT TRAIN PILOTS

15 Graduates secure employment as ECRL Assistant Train Pilots, marking RHB Islamic's first employment initiative under Bank Negara Malaysia's iTEKAD Employment

Liuzhou – RHB Islamic Bank Berhad (“RHB Islamic” or “the Bank”) and Pahang Skills Development Centre (“Pahang Skills”) marked the successful graduation of 15 participants from the East Coast Rail Link Industrial Skills Training (“PLKI-ECRL”) Upskilling Programme, following the completion of their specialised railway training at Liuzhou Railway Vocational Technical College (“LRVTC”), China, with all graduates securing employment as Assistant Train Pilots with ECRL Operation Sdn. Bhd. (“EOSB”).

The PLKI-ECRL Upskilling Programme provides asnaf and B40 youth with specialised training for roles within the rail industry. In supporting the initiative, RHB Islamic contributed RM265,500 in zakat to co-sponsor the training costs with Malaysia Rail Link Sdn. Bhd. (“MRL”) and China Communications Construction Company (ECRL) Sdn. Bhd. (“CCCECRL”). The programme marks the Bank’s first employment initiative under Bank Negara Malaysia’s (“BNM”) iTEKAD Employment.

Dato’ Adissadikin Ali, Managing Director of RHB Islamic Bank Berhad, said “This programme demonstrates how zakat can go beyond financial assistance to help people build skills and access real employment opportunities. By supporting the training of asnaf and B40 youth for roles in the rail industry, we are helping participants take a step towards greater financial independence and more sustainable livelihoods. RHB Islamic is committed to using Islamic social finance to create meaningful opportunities for underserved communities. Through our first employment initiative under iTEKAD Employment, we are pleased to see the participants graduate with industry-relevant skills and move into jobs that can provide a more stable source of income for themselves and their families.”

Over the five-month programme, participants received hands-on training in core train operations, safety procedures, driving simulations and railway systems, alongside workplace readiness and soft skills development. The training prepared them for their new roles as Assistant Train Pilots supporting the safe and efficient operation of the ECRL.

Dato’ Sri Darwis Abdul Razak, Chief Executive Officer of MRL, said, “As the ECRL moves towards operations, having a trained local workforce will be important to supporting its operational needs. These graduates will have the opportunity to put their training into practice as Assistant Train Pilots and contribute to the ECRL Trial Operation in September 2026, ahead of the targeted commencement of revenue service in January 2027.”

Introduced by BNM in July 2026, iTEKAD Employment expands the existing iTEKAD social finance initiative beyond entrepreneurship and financial protection to support individuals from vulnerable communities in gaining stable employment and income. The initiative brings together financial institutions, training providers, funding partners and employers to provide skills training and employment opportunities to participating individuals.

Dato' Mas'ut bin Awang Samah, Chairman of Pahang Skills Development Centre, said, "The partnership brings together training, industry and employment to give participants a clear pathway from skills development to jobs. We are pleased to support RHB Islamic and its partners in preparing local talent for opportunities in the growing rail industry."

The programme forms part of RHB Islamic's broader efforts to channel zakat towards initiatives that create longer-term economic opportunities for asnaf and underserved communities. By linking zakat support with skills training and employment, the Bank aims to help beneficiaries build more sustainable livelihoods and greater financial independence.
