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From KL to Penang rail quick

Electrified double-track project to cut journey to just three hours



All systems go: Piling works being carried out for the electrified double-track rail project at Simpang Ampat in Nibong Tebal yesterday.

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BUTTERWORTH: It will only take three hours to travel from Penang to Kuala Lumpur by train when the electrified double-track project (EDTP) is completed.

Once operational, commuters can have breakfast in Penang, lunch in KL and return to the island for dinner, all in the same day. Currently, the train journey between the destinations takes about nine hours.

The RM12.4bil stretch from Ipoh to Padang Besar, undertaken by MMC-Gamuda, is now 5% completed and expected to be ready on Jan 7, 2013. It will link up to the Rawang line.

"Once completed, modern trains with heavier loadings can run on the flatter, straighter alignment at a speed of up to 160kph," said MMC-Gamuda JV Project director Datuk Azmi Mat Nor.

He said RM10bil had been invested in double tracking the Klang Valley and from Rawang to Ipoh.

"The EDTP can be the backbone for future commuter services in the northern area, similar to the Klang Valley commuter services," he added.

"It will only take about 90 minutes to travel from Penang to Ipoh by train when the project is completed, compared to about four hours now," he told newsmen during a site inspection yesterday.

Azmi said the alignment for the 329km Ipoh-Padang Besar double-track project cuts across the four northern states of Penang, Perak, Kedah and Perlis.

"We are working closely with the four state governments and they are very helpful," he said.

"We do not foresee much problem for the next five years as 70% of land needed for the project is

owned by Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB)."

Azmi said rail transport in the country currently had a market share of just 3%, compared to road transport which commanded 89% share.

"Over-reliance on road transport is unsustainable, especially during congestion on expressways and festive seasons," he added.

Azmi said that up to RM3bil worth of construction packages had been awarded to contractors, of which RM1.6bil had been given to deserving bumiputra contractors. About 700 sub-contractors were involved in the project.

He said a further RM2bil worth of projects would be awarded in stages.

Azmi said the EDTP was an extensive infrastructure project which would transform the existing single-track line from Johor Baru to Padang Besar to electrified double tracks, covering a distance of 968km.



»It will only take 90 minutes to travel from Penang to Ipoh«

DATUK AZMI MAT NOR