

Electric trains from March



All smiles: Ong (centre) gathering with the villagers after they received their gratuity yesterday.

Testing to be completed by CNY

By SYLVIA LOOI
sylvia@thestar.com.my

SUNGAI SIPUT: Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd's electric train sets, will begin operating in March, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said.

He said the first train, which had arrived from South Korea, was now undergoing testing.

"By March, everything should be in place. We also expect to receive the remaining four trains from South Korea then," he said here yesterday.

He was speaking to reporters after presenting gratuity to 43 squatters affected by the Ipoh-Padang Besar electrification and double-tracking project.

Ong said the testing of the train was expected to be completed by Chinese New Year.

On comparisons between the speed of electric trains to be used in Malaysia and in developed countries, Ong said the lower speed here

was due to the gauge in the tracks.

"Our gauge is one metre while in developed countries, it is the standard gauge which was wider. Trains can go faster," he said.

Ong said he will submit to the Cabinet on the land matter concerning Kuala Sapatang and Simpang Halt.

"The land in question is owned by KTMB and to make good Barisan Nasional's promise during the Bukit Gantang by-election, the land will now be transferred to the Perak government before the state gives it to the people," he said.

Ong said this was the result of a close relationship between the Federal and state government.

Earlier in his speech, Ong said 490 squatter families in Perak had been paid a total of RM4mil in gratuity.

"Each family received RM8,200," he said, adding that the Federal Government also set aside RM12mil to prepare infrastructure in new settlement schemes for the affected squatters.