



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Workers cheering as they complete the final leg of the structural works on the 3.3km-long Berapit twin tunnels in Padang Rengas yesterday.

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Rail service set to take off



The Berapit twin tunnels in Padang Rengas have nine cross passages as part of their safety and maintenance feature. — NST picture by Ikhwan Munir

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PADANG RENGAS: The government is confident that trains will be used as the preferred mode of transport once the Ipoh-Padang Besar electrified double-track project is completed.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha said at present, only three per cent of the population boarded trains to go to their destinations, compared with 30 per cent in developed countries.

"We are expecting more passengers on trains based on the tremendous response after the Electric Train Services (ETS) from Ipoh to KL Sen-

tral was launched in August.

"The government is on the right track by upgrading the public transport system and there are plans to build an electrified double-track project between Gemas and Johor Baru."

He was speaking at the launch of the final stretch of the Ipoh-Padang Besar electrified double-track project at the Berapit twin tunnels by MMC-Gamuda Joint Venture (MGJV) here yesterday.

The 3.3km twin tunnels are the longest twin railway tunnels in South East Asia which features a "horse-shoe" diameter shape that is nine metres in width and nine metres in

height. The tunnels have nine cross passages as part of their safety and maintenance feature.

The breakthrough marked an end to one of the most complex and challenging works for the entire 329km of the electrified double-track project.

The Ipoh-Padang Besar electrified double-track project costing RM12.5 billion, which runs across Perak, Penang, Kedah and Perlis is expected to be completed in 2013.

The project would strengthen the economic components in the Northern Corridor Economic Region, especially in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing and services, including tourism sectors in the four states.

MGJV executive director Datuk Azmi Mat Nor said 70 per cent of the work on the tunnels had been completed while 15 per cent would involve infrastructure work and the rest would be the track. Work on the twin tunnels is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

About the accident which claimed seven lives at the Genting slip road on Friday, Kong said it was the responsibility of bus companies to ensure their drivers possessed valid driving licences.

"The companies should do a check on the drivers, They should not hire drivers who do not have a valid licence. That is being irresponsible."