

# Ipoh-Padang Besar electric railway work well on track

**PETALING JAYA:** The Ipoh-Padang Besar railway double-tracking and electrification project is 43% complete and on schedule for completion by December 2013, contractor MMC-Gamuda Joint Venture Sdn Bhd said.

Company director Datuk Azmi Mat Nor said the RM12.49bil project was also not expected to suffer any cost overrun.

"Our contract with the Government is a lump sum. If the scope of work remains the same, any additional cost will be borne by us," he told a media conference yesterday.

The 329km double-tracking project involves the construction of a railway line parallel to the existing one between Ipoh and Padang Besar as well as its electrification.

The double track is designed to cater to electric train sets with top speeds of 160kph.

Azmi said the company had mitigated against possible cost increases of raw materials by "forward buying".

He said it had "locked in" more than three-quarters of the materials needed for the project.

Azmi added that the project had created 90,000 jobs, 95% of them filled by locals.

"The hiring of local professionals, such as engineers and consultants, was more cost-efficient than hiring foreign talents," said Azmi.

He said MMC-Gamuda awarded work to 310 sub-contractors and suppliers, although some 10% have had their contracts terminated for failing to meet preset requirements.

"If the sub-contractors are behind schedule by 10%, their contracts are terminated. Close to 30 have had their contracts terminated.

"This project cannot afford to fail. If one contractor fails, the project will be derailed. If they are slow, they will slow down the rest," he said. The project, which started in January 2008, was expected to contribute to 0.75% of the national gross domestic product (GDP), Azmi said.

Among the significant engineering achievements of the project were two tunnels in Bukit Berapit and Larut near Taiping, a swing bridge in Penang, and a marine viaduct in Bukit Merah.