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`Ampang Crawl' to become a run

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The infamous "Ampang Crawl" is finally going to become a thing of the past, soon.

On Jan 1, the RM734 million Ampang-Kuala Lumpur elevated highway is expected to be opened to traffic.

The 7.4-kilometre highway is 92 per cent completed and the concessionaire for the project, Projek Lintasan Kota Sdn Bhd, is now discussing the toll rates with the Government, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today.

"Once the highway is opened, motorists will be able to travel from Jalan Tun Razak to Ampang in about four minutes, compared to the present 40 minutes," he said after visiting the project site.

The highway begins at Wisma Denmark on Jalan Ampang, near the junction with Jalan Sultan Ismail, and ends near Taman Ampang Utama (going along the banks of the Sungai Kelang and Sungai Ampang).

Interchanges will be built at Jalan Sultan Ismail, Tun Razak, Keramat, Ulu Kelang and Ampang.

The elevated highway provides motorists with dual three-lane carriageways from the Jalan Sultan Ismail interchange to the Keramat interchange and dual two-lane carriageways from the Keramat interchange all the way to the Ampang interchange.

Samy Vellu also assured motorists that the toll rates for the highway, which was earlier delayed by 19 months because of the economic downturn, would be "people-oriented" and not burden motorists.

"The concessionaires have been awarded a 33-year concession while some 30,000 vehicles are expected to use the highway daily," he said.

However, he said the concessionaires had decided not to open the highway to lorries above 40 tonnes and motorcycles and bicycles.

About 150 squatter families and 30 houses from the Kampung Baru and Taman Keramat areas were relocated at a cost of RM145 million to make way for the project.

There will be only one toll plaza located at Jalan Datuk Keramat. The plaza will have manual lanes and six electronic lanes.

Other facilities on the highway include emergency telephone system, variable message signages, closed circuit television monitors, traffic control room and electronic toll collection.

Samy Vellu also later visited residents in the Datuk Keramat area who were recently hit by floods.

He said the Cabinet had agreed two weeks ago to pay compensation totalling more than RM3 million to residents from the Datuk Keramat area and those from the Kampung Baru, Pantai and Pandan areas.

"(Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had personally agreed to the compensation and we expect to pay the affected residents who total about 1,800 soon."

In an effort to ensure there was no recurrence of flooding in Keramat and Kampung Baru, he said the Drainage and Irrigation Department would build two pump houses in the area.

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