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A tunnel breakthrough

**BY ROYCE CHEAH**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The anticipation was high.

The tunnel boring machine, nicknamed *Gemilang*, was expected to “arrive” at any moment.

At 6.40pm yesterday, the earth shook a little and *Gemilang's* giant churning blades broke through at Taman Desa.

The look of satisfaction on the faces of those who have been working on the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART) project tells it all.

It has been 20 months since *Gemilang* started work on Aug 31, 2004, from the Public Works Department field in Jalan Chan Sow Lin for the south drive of the project.



A worker looking at ‘*Gemilang*’ after it emerged from the ground at Taman Desa on Saturday.

It has travelled 3,968m.

Another machine, *Tuah*, which started at the same time, is heading northwards and is expected to touch surface at Kampung Pandan in December.

The RM2bil project traversing over 9.7km, now 78% completed, is expected to alleviate the Klang Valley's notorious floods and traffic woes.

It will have a two-tier highway running underneath sections of the city.

Another level is meant to carry excess water to retention ponds before they are released into the Klang river.

At the site yesterday, Drainage and Irrigation Department director-general Datuk Keizrul Abdullah was a happy man.

“I’m very happy and grateful that this project has not encountered major problems,” he said, adding that tunnelling works should be completed by the end of the year.

He said the machines would be dismantled and used again if the need arises.

Keizrul said the SMART project was one of the initiatives by the Government to solve the flood problem.

But it would not completely rid the city of floods, he added.