

Fire-hit Serangoon wet market may reopen this month

■ BY JALELAH ABU BAKER

MOST of the stallholders at the Serangoon Avenue 3 wet market that caught fire last month may be able to restart their businesses later this month.

The fire broke out at the market, whose owner is E Land Properties, at 11.30pm on March 15. No one was injured.

The company is in talks with the authorities to allow the stallholders to resume business after electrical repairs are completed.

Said a spokesman for the company: "There has been constant communication between E Land Properties and the stallholders, and status updates are given whenever possible."

Thirty stalls have been out of business since the fire.

Works dealing with electric wiring, broken tiles and repainting, which are managed by the Marine Parade Town Council, are expected to be completed by the middle of this month, said Mr Seah Kian Peng, an MP for Marine Parade GRC, where the wet market is situated.

E Land's spokesman also added that repair works are under way at the moment, following the clearing of debris, and that hoardings have been installed to segregate the affected areas from those that are still intact. The ceiling is also being repainted.

Mr Seah added that although the market looks badly burnt, its structure is still intact, making it easier to reinstate its operations.

The Singapore Turf Club's Serangoon Central off-course betting centre, which occupies the second and third floors of the three-storey building, is partially open for business.

The outlet, which was recently renovated, was closed for a few days after the fire.

When The Straits Times visited the market in the aftermath of the fire, the market was full of soot and debris.

Mr Mohamed Sabri Sulaiman, who had been selling fish there for more than 10 years, was seen packing up all that he could.

All that remained of his business were the tools of his trade: weighing scales and knives.

"I must think about what I can do. I'm shocked. This was my rice bowl," he said.

The 53-year-old is the sole breadwinner of his family and supports his wife and two school-going children.

Mr Seah said that an interim market will not be necessary as the market looks like it will be up and running soon.

Furthermore, residents in the area can shop at the FairPrice and Shop N Save supermarkets, as well as shops selling fresh meat and vegetables, in the vicinity.

Resident Joyce Foo, 50, whose maid used to shop at the market, is glad the wet market will be back soon.

"It is only here at the wet market that you can touch and feel the products, and bargain," she said.