

## **A SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE RAILWAY LINE**

### **1 HISTORY OF THE RAILWAY LINE**

- 1.1 Through its century of operation, the Rail Corridor has acquired a rich patina of history not only as an important transport linkage, but also in the collective memories of people who have travelled between Singapore and Malaysia. Known formerly as the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) Railway Line, it served as a significant means of goods transport, communications and passenger travel. With Singapore envisioned as the start and end point of a rail network which would stretch west to Calais in France, north to Hankou in China and onwards to the Trans-Siberian network, the construction of the rail was seen as a symbol of progress, promising to connect Singapore to the rest of the world.
- 1.2 The railway history can be described in 3 phases, namely, (1) the establishment of the Singapore-Kranji Railway, (2) integration to the Malayan Peninsula and Keppel Harbour, and finally, (3) the addition of the Jurong Spur Line.

#### **1.2.1 *Establishment of the Singapore-Kranji Railway, 1903***

- a. The railway line was first completed on 1 January 1903 with train services connecting Tank Road Station (also known as the Singapore Station) to Bukit Timah Station. From the Tank Road Terminus, the train went through a cutting between Tank Road and Oxley Road and then up an incline so as to cross Orchard Road on an overhead bridge near the Cold Storage premises (now Centrepoint). Further travel would lead to Newton Station at Newton Road, Cluny Road Station, Holland Road Station and to Bukit Timah Station. By 10 April the same year, the service extended northwards to Woodlands Station, with the journey consisting also of stops at Bukit Panjang and Mandai. A typical journey from Tank Road to Woodlands took approximately 80 minutes.
- b. In end 1906, with much of the trade flourishing at the Singapore River, the railway extended southwards to Pasir Panjang with an addition of 3 more stops, People's Park Station, Borneo Wharf Station before terminating at Pulau Saigon Terminus.

#### **1.2.2 *Integration with Johore and Keppel Harbour, 1923-1932***

- a. The construction of the kilometre-long Causeway land bridge linking the island to peninsular Malaya opened a door of opportunities. The natural wealth of Malaya e.g. tin and

rubber could now be effectively distributed to the markets of the world. Passenger trains were also subsequently added to the line for seamless transport between Singapore, Malaya and even further afield.

- b. Meanwhile, the Singapore-Kranji Railway was beset by inconveniences caused by seasonal heavy rainfall that occasionally flooded Bukit Timah Road from as early as 1903. This continued well into the 1910s and 1920s, and at the height of the problem, finally culminated in a legislative action to realign the stretch of the railway line between Bukit Timah to a planned new terminus at Tanjong Pagar, the latter having been planned in tandem with the increasing importance of Keppel Harbour. A new Bukit Timah Station was also constructed on high ground at King Albert Park and the canal and road at Bukit Timah crossed over by a 150-foot railway bridge before connecting to the old Bukit Panjang and Woodlands Stations. This revised alignment, the 1932 deviation, came with 2 new stops at Tanglin Halt and Alexandra Halt, which were subsequently discontinued by 1965.

### **1.2.3 Addition of the Jurong Spur Line, 1965**

- a. The addition of the Jurong Spur Line in 1965 arose out of the need to serve the Jurong Industrial Estate, which was conceived to boost Singapore's fledgling post-war economy. Connected to the main trunk line near Bukit Timah Railway Station, the spur line was seen as an efficient means for transporting raw materials to meet the envisaged demand and supply market in Peninsular Malaya and Southern Thailand. In barely less than 2 years, the anticipated traffic volume was not realised as Singapore had separated politically from Malaysia in 1965. The Jurong Line ceased operations in the early 1990s.
- 1.3 On 24 May 2010, the governments of Singapore and Malaysia reached an agreement to relocate the KTM railway station from Tanjong Pagar to the Woodlands Train Checkpoint by 1 July 2011. The last KTM train pulled out of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station at 11pm on 30 June 2011.

## **2 RAILWAY STATIONS**

### **2.1. TANJONG PAGAR RAILWAY STATION**

- 2.1.1. Constructed between 1929 and 1932, the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was one of three major signal cabins along the Malay Peninsula's West Coast Rail Line which stretched from Singapore in the south to Butterworth in the north. Designed by Serbian architect D. S. Petrovich of renowned architecture firm Swan and Maclaren, the 3-storey station building soon became a local landmark, standing out because of its grand facade – a fine example of Modern Architecture with Neo-classical and Art-Deco influences. The station exuded a sense of elegance and grandeur, reinforcing railway travel as a form of luxury and cementing Singapore's position as the gateway to Asia.
- 2.1.2. Tanjong Pagar Railway Station housed Singapore's most impressive collection of public figurative art adorning a civic building. The entrance of the station is sheltered by an arched portico featuring green roof-tiles influenced by Chinese temple architecture. Four towering statues representing the four economic pillars of Malaya's colonial economy, namely Agriculture, Commerce, Transport and Industry, stood in the spaces between the four arches at the station entrance. Located above the statues are four crests bearing the initials of the Federated Malay States Railway (FMSR), the predecessor of Kretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM).
- 2.1.3. Inside the main waiting hall, the 72-foot high barrel vault ceiling facilitates ventilation and natural lighting, with elongated windows located along two opposite walls that allow daylight to stream in. Beneath these windows are the framed initials of the FMSR, interspersed with the coats-of-arms of the Federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements. The remaining two walls of the station feature six murals designed by Doulton & Co. which illustrates Malaya's historically prominent economic activities, such as tin mining and rubber tapping. While the murals appear to be constructed of ceramic tiles, these were actually made from coloured rubber created by the Singapore Rubber Works using a patented process.
- 2.1.4. The twin platforms of the station were designed to accommodate the longest mail trains at the time. The two buffer hydraulic stops located near the end of the each railway platforms to prevent train carriages from going beyond the end of the rail lines are the only buffer stops found along the entire stretch of the KTM railway.

- 2.1.5. Only one of three railway stations along the Malay Peninsula's railway line with a hotel, the upper floors of the station building housed a 34-room hotel that was in operation for more than 60 years. In its heyday, the hotel boasted services considered equal to Raffles Hotel and was frequented by dignitaries such as members of the Malayan royalty.
- 2.1.6. On 8 April 2011, the Preservation of Monuments Board (PMB) gazetted the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station building as a National monument.

## **2.2. BUKIT TIMAH RAILWAY STATION**

- 2.2.1. As part of the 1932 railway scheme, smaller stations were built at Alexandra Halt, Tanglin Halt and Bukit Timah to provide railway services to Singapore's suburban areas. Today, only Bukit Timah Railway Station remains.
- 2.2.2. The station building followed the style of traditional small town stations common in the United Kingdom and Malaya in the 1930s, with its quaint country cottage appearance making it an endearing local landmark. The simple, single-storey brick building once housed the station masters' office, signals room, a closed waiting hall and an open-sided waiting area.
- 2.2.3. Cargo such as horses used to be unloaded and loaded at the station. While the station no longer performed the role of a freight interchange in its recent history, it was where key tokens were exchanged between train drivers and the station master. A train coming from the north would deposit the key token for the northern stretch (i.e. Woodlands to Bt Timah Railway Station) before picking up the key token for the southern stretch (i.e. Bt Timah Railway Station to Tanjong Pagar Railway Station). The key tokens have thus come to symbolize the authority to pass in the single track system.
- 2.2.4. On 27 May 2011, Bukit Timah Railway Station was conserved.