

Farewell, Tanjong Pagar

NST 11/7/2011 MS 12.

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SINGAPORE: It was a heartfelt day as thousands of people thronged Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd's Tanjong Pagar station yesterday to bid farewell and to have a final view of the station that had served both Malaysia and Singapore, and bridged their peoples, for the past 79 years.

Not only was the station swarmed with people from as early as 6am, certain stretches of the 20km railway track from Woodlands in northern Singapore to Tanjong Pagar in the south were also surrounded by people armed with cameras and camcorders who positioned themselves at various vantage points to take their last snaps of passing KTMB trains.

The last Kuala Lumpur-Singapore train, *Ekspres Sinaran*, which left KL Sentral at 9am, reached Tanjong Pagar at 6pm. The last north-bound passenger train, *Ekspres Senandung Sutera*, departed Tanjong Pagar at 10pm.

Tickets for all seven train services departing from the Tanjong Pagar station yesterday were sold out. And each time a train arrived or departed from the station, well-wishers were seen greeting or bidding farewell to passengers with their cameras.

Outside the building, visitors were also seen using the building as the backdrop of their pictures for posterity. Inside the station, passengers and visitors took the opportunity to hunt for souvenir items at several booths set up by KTMB.

Station master Shamsul Bahri said the station

had never been as alive and crowded the way it was yesterday.

"We set up booths to sell souvenirs. There was a corner showing a documentary on the station. All these activities were crowd-pullers.

"There was a last-minute rush among the crowd, as the station would be locked up from tomorrow (today)."

On the whole, yesterday's atmosphere at the station was very much like a carnival.

Among the hot-selling items were T-shirts, key chains, mugs, fridge magnets, magnetic book-marks, PVC files and mini scrolls featuring KTMB's history at the Tanjong Pagar station.

Loke Li Hoon, a KTMB worker who helped out at the booths, said most of the items had been snapped up by visitors earlier this week.

"Most of the buyers were visitors who came here to take pictures of the station."

Hadijah Bador, 50, of Gombak, Selangor, arrived in Tanjong Pagar on *Ekspres Sinaran* to visit her uncle in Bedok.

"I come to Singapore three or four times a year and I only take the train.

"It was pure coincidence that the train I took today was the last train from Kuala Lumpur.

"After today, I would have to change my mode of transport when travelling between the two countries."



Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar waving to the crowd as he boards the last train leaving the Tanjong Pagar station last night. — NST picture by Ahmad Tajudin



KTMB employee Siti Harina Ayu Ali Akhbar hands out recognition certificates to passengers of the intercity train on the last day of operations at the Tanjong Pagar railway station.



A crowd snapping away as the last train pulls out of the Tanjong Pagar station. — NST picture by Effendy Rashid