

Our Reference: PBBPP.UKK.100-2/1/1(68)

Date : 6 September 2022

PRESS RELEASE

PENANG HILL RAILWAY: A CENTENARY CELEBRATION (1923 – 2023)

Penang Hill Funicular Celebrates 100 Years of Transformation with Exciting Activities

Penang Hill Funicular System is celebrating the Centenary of its founding on 21st October 1923. The Centenary celebration will bring renewed interest in the history of Penang Hill's funicular and will be a reflection of Penang Hill's transformation over the past century.

In celebrating its achievements, Penang Hill Corporation will host a series of exciting events in 2023 to share with people from all walks of life, especially Penangites the milestones and challenges of the last 100 years, while looking forward to future opportunities.

The funicular is the only one of its kind in Malaysia and South East Asia. It has one of the steepest tunnel tracks in the world, and has transported over 47 million visitors, including local and international tourists, residents and the local community since 1924 up Penang Hill. It is a lifeline to the top of the hill from its base station at Jalan Bukit Bendera, Air Itam, other than the Jeep track or by hiking. The funicular takes passengers to the peak of Penang Hill and other substations.

Built over a century ago, the funicular is now Penang's iconic piece of history; where the railway idea was first initiated by three British residents in 1897, but their plan to use a steam engine failed. However, in 1909, the Penang Hill Railway project was revived and constructed based on a Swiss design by Arnold R Johnson, an engineer with the Federated Malay States Railways. The Penang Hill Railway was informally opened on 21st October 1923 for a trial operation before it was officially opened by the then Governor of Straits Settlement, Sir L.N. Guillemard on 1st January 1924. It carried 35,201 passengers and made 4,021 trips during that year.

In 1977, the first generation of four wooden carriages were replaced with the second-generation red carriages with fans and automatic sliding doors after serving the communities for over 50 years. Nonetheless, on 22nd February 2010, the second-generation carriages were also replaced after they were used for 30 years due to frequent breakdowns. The old funicular railway was temporarily closed and upgraded

with a new funicular railway from a two-section railway to a one-section system without any stops and replaced with the third-generation funicular coaches, 'Pinang' and 'Mutiara', from April 2011 until now.

Since its re-opening, taking the funicular to the top of Penang Hill has been a must-do thing for every tourist in Penang, making it an essential Penang experience. Visitors get to enjoy the funicular trip amidst the lush greenery and access to many picturesque views and attractions on the hill. It has also gained recognition through the official visits by the Queen Elizabeth II of England in 1972, the Emperor and Empress of Japan, The Prince of Cambodia and other dignitaries through the years.

Penang Hill Funicular has become an essential and dependable mode of transport for the residents, local community and visitors over the century. It helps to move people and goods efficiently, where the line is used to get to better jobs and improves mobility and the quality of life for all residents. Besides, the funicular connects humans with nature while helping to boost the economy for the local stakeholders on the hill and its surrounding areas, generating sustainable environmental, economic and social values.

Penang Hill Corporation today unveiled its Centenary logo contest to officially kick off an extended series of events leading up to the Penang Hill funicular system's 100th Anniversary on 21st October 2023. The logo contest is open to all Malaysians aged 18 years and above from 6th September until 6th October 2022. The Centenary logo must depict a solid visual or components to commemorate the heritage and contributions of Penang Hill Funicular that bring about the socio-economic transformation of Penang Hill and its surrounding areas. One winner will bring home RM500 in cash and a Funicular Pass with one year validity and limited-edition gifts, while there will be 5 consolation prizes of RM200 in cash and gifts awaiting you.

The Centenary celebration aims to promote the history, cultural heritage and biodiversity of Penang Hill, which is in line with its status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve that recently received its accolade under the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. Besides, there will be exciting programmes throughout 2023, where the Centenary celebration will include various educational programmes and webinars, mobile exhibitions and more involving the invaluable historical and natural heritage of Penang Hill to encourage more people to appreciate the uniqueness of it. Stay tuned for Penang Hill's highly-anticipated signature events such as Penang Hill Festival, Penang Hill Heritage Forest Challenge and Trash Free Hill happening next year that promise to be more memorable and experiential.

Don't miss out on getting a copy of Penang Hill Railway's special edition commemorative book and merchandises next year too. Additional details regarding the centennial activities and more will be available in the coming months. Please stay tuned to Penang Hill's social media and website for updates.

For enquiries, please contact Penang Hill Corporation at 04-828 8880 or email to inquiries@penanghill.gov.my.

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About Penang Hill Corporation

Penang Hill Corporation was established in 2009 through an enactment passed by the Penang State Legislative Assembly. Its main focus is to manage the funicular system, maintain and develop Penang Hill as a major ecotourism destination, and its vision is to make Penang Hill the hill resort of choice in Malaysia and the region.

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