



President Akufo-Addo (2nd from left), being supported by John-Peter Amewu (left), Minister of Railways, and Yohane Amah Ashitey, Tema Metropolitan Chief Executive Officer, to cut the tape to commission the Tema-Mpakadan rail line and the trains. Picture: SAMUEL TEI ADANO

# Tema-Mpakadan rail line commissioned

From Benjamin Xornam Glover, TEMA

- 2 new trains start operations

**T**HE suspense and scepticism that characterised the much-anticipated revival of the

country's rail transport were finally confined to history yesterday when President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo commissioned the 97.7-kilometre Tema-Mpakadan

standard gauge railway line and two modern Diesel

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Multiple Unit (DMU) trains at Tema. The flamboyant ceremony fully compensated for the agony of the April 18, 2024 test-run mishap, which temporarily threw the initial plans out of gear.

### Accident

On that fateful day, one of the newly acquired magnificent trains unexpectedly ran into a truck which was strangely parked across the railway track during an inaugural test-run prior to the start of its scheduled operations.

Following investigations into the matter, the driver of the truck was found guilty of causing damage to state property, and was, accordingly, sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

However, the new train eventually embarked on its dream journey yesterday, with President Akufo-Addo being one of the first passengers to travel on the railway line.

### History

The unveiling of the landmark railway line and the fully air-conditioned DMUs, with a two-tier comfortable seating arrangement for first class and economy class, and capacity of 255 passengers, marked the return of the railway enterprise for the movement of people and goods along the Eastern corridor of Ghana.

The construction of the Tema-Mpakadan Railway Line began in 2018 by Afcons Infrastructure, financed through an India Export-Import Bank credit facility at a cost of \$447 million.

The railway line is the first section of the Ghana-Burkina Faso interconnectivity project. One of the highlights of the project is a 300-metre rail bridge across the Volta River, near Senhi.

Other facilities include modern rail stations at Adome, Kpone, Doryumu-Jokpanya-Kodiabe, Shai Hills, Afienny, Ashaiman, Tema Industrial Area, and Tema Port, as well as two railheads at Mpakadan and Tema Harbour.

### Inauguration

Speaking at the event, President Akufo-Addo said the project, conceived under the administration of President John A. Kufuor was a good example of continuity in government for national development.

He said reducing the reliance on road transport for long distance freight and passenger movement, the new railway line would address several critical challenges that had hindered Ghana's development.

The President said the new line



The interior portion of the Railway enroute Tema-Mpakadan. Picture: SAMUEL TEI ADANO

would significantly decongest the roads, thereby alleviating the heavy burden that had led to severe traffic congestion, the rapid deterioration of road infrastructure and an alarming increase in road accidents.

He added that it would enhance the efficiency of port operations at Tema, minimising vessel waiting times and container dwelling times, thereby boosting the competitiveness of Ghana's ports.

"The integration of rail and inland water transport will also transform trade in agriculture by lowering freight costs, increasing the viability of agricultural enterprises along the Volta Lake and facilitating the seamless movement of goods and produce to and from northern Ghana and neighbouring landlocked countries," President Akufo-Addo said.

He described the new railway line as a transformative intervention to address the pressing issues comprehensively, stressing that when fully operational, the multimodal network would link the Tema port to the north-south transport corridor spanning some 400 kilometres and open new opportunities for the movement of fuel, cement, containerised cargo and agricultural produce.

"The economic and social benefits of this project are far-reaching and transformative. By alleviating the pressure on our road network it will extend the lifeline of critical routes, including those along the eastern corridor, while simultaneously lowering the cost of transporting bulk goods, agricultural produce and containers, thereby enhancing business competitiveness. It will offer a reliable and cost-effective transportation alternative for passengers in areas currently underserved by road networks, ensuring greater accessibility and convenience," he said.

"This project is far more than just a railway line. It is a lifeline that will empower communities, invigorate businesses and strengthen industries, ultimately making Ghana more resilient and prosperous," the President added.

### Achievement

The Minister of Railway Development, John-Peter Amewu, commended President Akufo-Addo for embarking on the longest single rail project completed since independence.

He indicated that other similar rail activities and infrastructure undertaken during President Akufo-Addo's tenure from 2017 included the Western Rail Line development projects, which were being developed in sections such as the 22-kilometre sections from Kojokrom to Manso section line, which was about 96 per cent complete, the continuation of work on the section between the port of Takoradi and the Huni Valley, which is about 78 kilometres done.

Mr Amewu added that the government was also financing the development of a new six-kilometre standard gauge line in Kumasi, between Adum and Kaase, as part of the Western Line Development Project.

The Hohoe Member of Parliament said the government had since 2017 been investing in the development of local capacity to maintain and sustain the rail system for the benefit of future generations, following the upgrade of the old railway training school in Sekondi and had since begun providing training to over 1,000 youthful Ghanaians and other nationals from and within the sub-region.

The school, he said, now awarded degrees and certificates to successful graduates through collaborative efforts by the Ministry of Railway Development and the Ministry of Mines and Technology in Tarkwa.

### Key strategy

The Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Railway Development Authority, Yaw Owusu, said one of the key strategies of the Tema-Mpakadan project was to build an intermodal transport system to link Tema Port to the Mpakadan Port.

That, he said, would ensure that imported goods in containers would be loaded onto trains and transferred from the trains onto barges at the Mpakadan Port to be ferried to the ports in the northern part of Ghana and subsequently transported on train and by road to neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger.

Mr Owusu said traditionally, railway lines were built in anticipation of a demographic and economic growth, and therefore, invited business communities to take advantage of the incredible and viable project by siting businesses along the route.

### India-Ghana relationship

The Indian High Commissioner to Ghana, Manish Gupta, said the commissioning of the railway line was the single largest project implemented under the government-to-government development partnership in Ghana and commended President Akufo-Addo for the realisation of what he termed a flagship project.

He said India had been a long-standing partner in Ghana's developmental journey and his country remained steadfast in its commitment towards the country's economic development, adding that Indian companies had invested nearly \$2 billion, with about \$1 billion in lines of credit, buyers' credit, during the last two decades.

He said India was among the leading trade partners and a source of foreign direct investment in this country.

### Appeal

The Stool Secretary of the Tema Traditional Council (TTC), Nii Shipi Amari Somponu II, said the expansion of the harbour and the volume of cargo handling had increased, hence the construction of the railway line was an indication that Ghana was prepared to make good use of the harbour to transport goods to its neighbouring landlocked countries.

Nii Somponu renewed the council's appeal to the government for the construction of a sea defence wall at Awudum in Tema New Town to forestall the gradual erosion of the lands as a result of the Tema Harbour Expansion Programme.

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