

Saudi Railway Co launches first passenger services

SAUDI ARABIA: Saudi Railway Co began operating its first regular passenger service between Riyadh and Al-Qassim on February 26, using one of its CAF-built diesel trainsets which can operate at up to 200 km/h.

Until April 1 the service will run five days a week, leaving the terminus close to the capital's King Khalid International Airport at 10.00 on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The journey time to Al-Qassim is 2 h 31 min, including a 10 min intermediate stop at Majmaah. The return trip leaves Al-Qassim at 15.00 with similar timings.

From April 2 the day train will become a daily service, but switch directions, departing from Al-Qassim at 05.00 and returning from KKIA at 18.00. In the third stage of its phased ramp-up, SAR plans to extend the day train further north to serve Hail, although no date for this has been announced. Phase 4 will see the introduction of overnight train linking Riyadh with Al-Qassim, Hail, Al-Jouf and Al-Qurrayat, 1 242 km from the capital.

SAR Vice-President for Operations Director Wallace Weatherell said it was 'a great day today, as we commenced the first high speed passenger service in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia'. He added that he was 'so proud of my team and all at SAR, with more to come'.

CAF is supplying a fleet of 12 diesel power cars and 65 coaches, which will form four daytime and two overnight trainsets. The standard day train will have seats for 444 passengers in business and economy class, while the overnight services will carry up to 377 passengers in a mix of seats and sleeping berths.

Source: railwaygazette.com