

CERTIFIED SAFE

FAST FERRIES SET TO MAKE DEBUT JAN 1

Give us a chance to prove new service will be better than existing one, says PPC chairman

AUDREY DERMAWAN
 GEORGE TOWN
 audreyd@nst.com.my

IT'S all systems go for Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) to take over the more-than-a-century-old Penang ferry service come Jan 1.

All arrangements are in place, and PPC will use three fast ferries, which have been certified safe by the Marine Department, to carry foot passengers. Meanwhile the existing *Pulau Angsa* ferry will transport two-wheelers (motorcycles and bicycles).

Upgrading of the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal, the Pangkalan Sultan Abdul Halim ferry terminal in Butterworth and the Pangkalan Raja Tun Uda ferry terminal here is ongoing for the new ferry service.

Penang Port Commission (PPC)

vowed to provide the best ferry service to the public amid criticisms from various quarters, particularly former Penang chief minister and finance minister Lim Guan Eng, who had called for the iconic car-carrying ferries to continue serving.

"We (PPC and PPSB) understand that there are differing views from various quarters following the announcement to phase out the car-carrying ferries by the end of this month. We respect their viewpoints.

"But our priority is to provide the best ferry service to the people of Penang.

"As such, I hope that everyone will give us a chance to prove that this new ferry service will be better than the existing one," he said after accompanying pressmen on a ferry ride to experience the new ferry service yesterday.

A fast ferry can carry up to 200 people and transport them in 10 minutes between the island and mainland during peak hours and 15 minutes during non-peak hours.

It will run 40 trips a day, at a cruising speed of between 12 knots and 15 knots from 6.30am to 11.30pm.

Foot passengers can take the



A fast ferry, docked at the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal, is one of three that will go into service from Jan 1. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

two weeks from Jan 1.

Present were PPSB chairman Datuk Syed Mohamad Syed Mur-taza, PPSB chief executive officer Sasedharan Vasudevan and PPSB chief operating officer Radhi Mo-hamad.

According to a report, the car-carrying ferries would cease on-

The interim plan would continue until PPSB introduces passenger-only water buses and vehicle transporters by July 2022.

Sasedharan said he was aware there were doubts about the fast ferries' safety, but gave an assurance that PPSB had obtained a

ment for it to use the vessels temporarily.

PPSB expects ferry users to increase to between 1.5 million and 1.8 million next year, with the new ferry service prioritising passenger safety and comfort.

Last year PPSB recorded 1.3 million foot passengers