

PORT OF CALL

Penang expects 1.8 million cruise passengers next year

GEORGE TOWN: Penang is looking to welcome 1.8 million passenger arrivals through cruise ship calls next year.

Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng said they were expecting to record 1.3 million passenger arrivals by end of this year, from international cruise calls, cruises and regional ferries.

He said this month alone, there were 37 international cruise calls bringing in 81,000 passengers.

In January next year, there will be 36 international cruise calls bringing 82,000 passengers and 28 international cruise calls bringing 60,000 passengers in February.

“The state has seen an overwhelming development in the cruise industry since last year, when we welcomed several maiden cruise liners. This year, the new *Genting Dream* luxury liner called on us for the first time.

“We expect to reap greater benefits from the ever-growing cruise industry,” Tan said at the PPC office here yesterday.

The year-old *Genting Dream* is the second biggest in the world, based on passenger capacity, after the Royal Caribbean’s *Harmony of the Seas*.

“It stretches 335m and with a displacement of 151,000 tonnes, it has a capacity to transport 3,500 passengers and 2,000 crew members,” he said.

Official figures from PPC showed there were 270 international cruise calls this year compared with 117 last year, 838 cruises to nowhere compared with 1,086 last year and 720 regional ferries compared with 852 last year.

The data also showed that there were 438,369 passengers from international cruise calls this year compared with 182,277 passengers last year, 650,000



Penang Port Commission chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng (left) with a replica of the *Genting Dream* cruise ship at Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal in Penang yesterday. PIC BY MUHAMMAD MIKAIL ONG

passengers from cruises to nowhere (compared with 524,225 passengers last year) and 190,000 from regional ferries (compared with 186,257 last year).

Tan said the Penang Port had

since been recognised as the best cruise ship port in the country after Langkawi, Port Klang, Melaka, Johor and Pahang.

“With this recognition, we are fast becoming the country’s important international cruise port.”

PPC is planning to embark on a RM200-million plan to expand the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal to enable it to receive larger cruise liners.

Work is expected to begin next year.