

Catamaran service on the cards

Ferry operations to be upgraded after nod given for Prasarana's takeover

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GEORGE TOWN: High-speed catamaran ferries to give pedestrians a fast commute across the sea will soon join marine traffic between the island and the mainland here.

This is one of the highlights of the Penang ferry service following confirmation that it will be sold to Prasarana Malaysia Berhad.

Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng (*pic*) said the inclusion of catamaran ferries was a long-awaited development of the ferry service that would mark a new era of public transportation between the island and mainland Penang.

Describing the addition of catamaran ferries as an upgrade, Tan said yesterday this would mean faster journeys and shorter ferry

intervals for pedestrian passengers.

"There are catamaran ferries with extra deck space for motorcycles and cyclists, and all parties involved are looking into every option available to see how to take the ferry service to the next level.

"We are aware that motorcyclists prefer the ferries because riding across the sea by bridge can be risky at night, in heavy traffic, storms or even strong crosswinds," he said.

He said since Prasarana ran the Rapid Penang buses, they would seamlessly integrate the bus and ferry services.

Tan said PPC was glad that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun



Razak and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai had given their approval for Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) to hand over the ferry operations to Prasarana Malaysia.

"Prasarana has proven itself as a mass transportation provider through its management of Rapid KL, Rapid Penang and the light rail transit services

in Klang valley.

"We are certain that the company's skill in operating mass transportation will result in vast improvements to the efficiency of the ferry service," Tan said.

He also said the Transport and Finance Ministries, Public Private Partnership Unit of the Prime

Minister's Department, PPC, PPSB and Prasarana had begun meeting to finalise the details of the ferries' handover.

PPC, he added, would continue to be the Government's monitoring body of the ferry service and he gave an assurance that the ferry fares would not be raised without the approval of his board.

He also said PPC had a special duty to ensure that the ferry crew members, technical team and other employees would be well cared for during the takeover.

"They keep on serving the public faithfully and help preserve the ferry legacy.

"Even with Penang Bridge eroding the profitability of the ferries since 1985 and people grumbling constantly while they struggle to serve, the employees have stayed true to their task," Tan said.