

# Law blasted over bloated figures

## PPC chief: Cruise ships disgorge just 6,500 tourists, not 17,000 as announced

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**GEORGE TOWN:** Four cruise vessels brought 6,523 tourists to Penang for a day trip instead of the 17,000 announced by the state government earlier.

They created a busy day at Swettenham Pier but Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairman Dotuk Tan Teik Cheng is puzzled by that initial bloated figure proclaimed by state Tourism Committee chairman Danny Law Heng Kiang in January.

"I can't figure out how he came up with that number. Ask me first next time. Don't give inaccurate figures," he added sternly.

Tan said it was worrying that the state exco member had announced such an inflated figure.

"Many Penangites and the local authorities called me because of Law's claim. They feared for the traffic.

"If this non-existent 17,000 ship passengers wanted bus tours for their shore excursions, then 566 buses would have crammed into areas like Kek Lok Si temple, Penang Hill and the Sleeping Buddha temple.

"It would take six to seven large cruise ships with about 2,500 passengers each to bring 17,000 tourists ashore in a single day.

"We would have had a logistics nightmare at sea, traffic jams on land and unhappy tourists and Penangites everywhere," he said.

According to PPC's records, 68



**Rare arrival:** Passengers from the Star Clipper, one of the few true sailing cruise vessels, coming ashore at Swettenham Pier cruise terminal in Weld Quay.

buses, 45 trishaws and five vans entered the pier to take the arrivals on package tours while about 4,000 chose to walk into the heritage enclave in search of their own adventures.

In mid-January, Law called a press conference to announce that 17,000 tourists would arrive yesterday on seven cruise ships.

He later announced that local tour operators were scrambling to find enough 30-seater tour buses to take the tourists on shore excursions.

Last Friday, he held another press conference to say that 10,000 would arrive yesterday, though he expected only 7,000 to come ashore while the rest would stay on board.

Tan said Law had not contacted PPC to get the passenger manifests.

According to the manifests, Diamond Princess came with 2,739 passengers, Mein Schiff 1 had 1,888, Superstar Gemini 1,755 and Star Clipper - a sailing cruise ship - brought 141.

Tan went out to the docks of the pier yesterday to greet the passen-

gers and view the arrival of Star Clipper.

This sailing ship, powered only by 16 sails rigged on four masts, is one of the few cruise ships in the world designed this way. It is on a seven-day round trip to and from Phuket.

Tan said another ship, Leisure World, was homeported here so her passengers of about 800 yesterday were counted as departures and not arrivals.

Law went on board Diamond Princess yesterday for a visit and when asked, maintained that to his knowledge, "about 10,000" cruise ship tourists arrived yesterday.

He also clarified that his estimated figure included two ships on Sunday that brought 7,000 tourists.

But the passenger manifest for Sunday showed only Aida Bella arriving with 2,022 passengers, while Superstar Libra left for Thailand and her passengers were not counted as arrivals.

On March 14 last year, four ships brought 8,268 tourists and 3,518 crew members.

On Dec 14, 2015, three ships brought 6,056 tourists and a combined crew of 3,058.

According to press archives, Swettenham Pier began receiving same-day calls from multiple cruise ships since 2015.



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