

Penang in need of a third berth

State hoping Federal Govt will expand Swettenham Pier to fit more cruise liners

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GEORGE TOWN: The state government has urged the Federal Government to expand Swettenham Pier to cater to more international cruise vessels to Penang.

State Tourism Development Committee chairman Danny Law Heng Kiang said that there was room for expansion between Swettenham Pier and Tanjung City Marina in Weld Quay.

"One more new berth will be great. We have been receiving an increasing number of tourists via cruise ships each year.

"At the moment, only two cruise vessels can dock at any one time at Swettenham Pier.

"We are preparing for the arrival of seven cruise vessels, including the Superstar Libra and the Amusement World, which has its home port here, on March 13.

"We are expecting to receive about 17,000 passengers on that day alone, the most number of tourists from cruise ships in one day," he told a press conference at the Queen Victoria Memorial Clock Tower yesterday.

The five other cruise liners arriving on March 13 are Diamond Princess, Mein Schiff, Superstar Gemini, Star Clipper and Leisure World.

Law said that the Cruise Food and Cultural Fiesta 2017 would be held at Fort Cornwallis on March 13 to entertain the guests and the public.

"There will also be chingay performances, traditional dances, local cuisines and handicraft stalls. We are finalising the programme," he added.

Yesterday, scores of taxis made a beeline for Swettenham Pier and clogged up the area's roads from 8am to 5pm when the gargantuan Mariner of the Seas and Aida Bella arrived.

Some 2,600 passengers from Aida Bella landed from Phuket, while 3,114 passengers from Mariner of the Seas arrived from Singapore.

The Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal, which was established in 1903 and given a major refurbishment in 2010, handled nearly 1.1 million passengers in 2010.

The number of passengers grew to nearly 1.29 million in 2013.



Full house: The Mariner of the Seas (left) and Aida Bella vessels docking at Swettenham Pier in George Town, Penang.