



View of the North Butterworth Container Terminal in Butterworth, on the Penang mainland.

# Pier expansion to begin April

Minister: First phase at cruise terminal to be ready in 24 to 36 months

By LIEW JIA XIAN and IMRAN HILMY north@thestar.com.my

THE first phase of the expansion of Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) will take place in April.

Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said the first phase, which costs around RM150mil, involves the extension of the pier to 400m and is expected to be completed within 24 to 36 months.

"The first phase is the most important one as it will bring a big multiplier effect.

"With the extension of the pier, we can take in two large cruise ships at the same time.

"A large cruise ship can take in around 7,000 passengers and 3,000 crew members.

"The passengers who stopped by Penang spent an average of USD150 (RM611) per person.

"With the extension, we can take in around three million overseas tourists per annum.

"Next, we will improve the infrastructure at the pier," he said at a press conference during an official visit to Penang Port Sdn Bhd at Swettenham Pier recently.

Lim added that the other phases of the development plan would start later and is estimated to cost RM350mil, all funded by the

private sector.

"The overall cost of the development plan is around RM500mil.

"The private sector will invest and as the government, we will give our support," he said.

Lim also said tenders to operate two duty free shops were awarded and they are now dealing with Customs for licences to sell liquor.

"One of the shops is operating and they are selling chocolates and perfumes now.

"Tourists coming into the port can buy items from the duty free shops," he said.

Lim also announced that Malaysia is ranked third among countries in Asia as the top 10 destinations by number of ship calls last year in Asia's cruise ship deployment and capacity.

SPCT is also the number one international transit in 2019 for the cruise industry in Malaysia, followed by Port Klang and Langkawi.

Also present were Penang Port Commission chairman Jeffrey Chew, Penang Port Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Sasedharan Vasudevan, Penang Port Commission general manager Monaliza Suhaimi, Senator Lim Hui Ying, Bukit Bendera MP Wong Hon Wai, Jelutong MP RSN Rayer, several assemblymen and Penang



Lim (centre) flanked by Chew (right) and Sasedharan speaking to reporters at the press conference at North Butterworth Container Terminal on the mainland.

Island City Council (MBPP) councillors.

At a separate event, Lim said that the Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) would invest RM350mil in the next three years for the development and growth of the North Butterworth Container Terminal (NBCT).

He said a total of RM300mil has already been used in the last two years and with the additional allocation, NBCT will be transformed to become an international port.

He said that efforts are also underway to create a free commercial zone at the port which has been delayed under the previous government's administration.

"After the takeover, we decided to continue with the plan and currently, we are waiting for the Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia to submit the final report to the negotiation committee before it is presented to the Finance Ministry.

"This effort will surely help in developing the growth of the ports in Penang," he said during a press conference after chairing a dialogue session with stakeholders in the logistics sector at NBCT.

Lim also said that PPSB would encourage the addition of routes from southern Thailand to NBCT by Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) cargo services.

He said last year alone, the market domination from the region had increased when a lot of traders from southern Thailand used the train services to export their products.

Lim added that last year, NBCT recorded an impressive increase in its export values – from 60% to 72%, the highest percentage recorded so far.

He said it was a positive sign and continued efforts must be taken to ensure the port can fulfill its capacity and efficiency to handle increasing demands.

"We want the port not only to become a main port but as an international port so that we can attract more trade from foreign countries," he added.

Lim noted that NBCT was different from other ports such as Port Klang and Port of Tanjung Pelepas as it depended mostly on the market export from southern Thailand.

He said this was a good opportunity for NBCT to capture the market which would help in the growth of the port.

"We must look at capturing the market (export) from foreign countries," he said, adding that the domestic market is too small and would not be able to help in the growth of the port.



Lim (second right) checking out the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal during his official visit to Penang Port Sdn Bhd.