

'We'll work with Penang govt to settle ferry woes'

Wee stresses importance of Federal-state ties to resolve issues

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GEORGE TOWN: The Federal Government will work quickly with the Penang government to resolve the state's ferry service disruption, says Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

The Transport Minister also gave this assurance and indicated that he looked forward to working with Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow.

"I am confident in the professional and mature attitude of the Chief Minister, who is also Tanjong MP. So, this issue can be resolved quickly for the sake of the rakyat," he said.

The last operational ferry, *Pulau Undan*, developed serious engine trouble on Monday.

As a stop gap measure another ferry - *Pulau Angsa* - has been brought back into service on Tuesday.

Ferry operator RapidFerry has also provided five Rapid Penang buses to take pedestrian commuters across Penang Bridge for free until *Pulau Undan* is repaired.

Dr Wee said his ministry had a discussion with Chow yesterday to work together to resolve the matter.

"I stress the importance of having a close relationship between the Federal Government and all state governments in resolving all the problems of the people," Dr Wee said.

The ferry service had been ailing ever since the Penang Bridge opened in 1985.

Ridership dropped so substantially that the service is running at a loss of almost RM30mil a year. The ferry, however, is vital for commuters.

For a token sum of RM1, the whole ferry service was transferred from Penang Port concession holder, Penang Port Sdn Bhd, to national public transport operator Prasarana Bhd in 2018.

Plans to upgrade the service with catamarans have been on the drawing board for years.

In 2015, the Penang government made a bid to take over the ferries, but negotiations halted because it could not get its full wish list met, which included 30 pre-approved licences for water taxis.

Meanwhile in Parliament, Dr Wee also said his ministry was committed to ensuring that all modes of public transport system, including the Penang ferries, remained at a satisfactory level.

Watch the video
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