



# 5 Penang ferries to be converted into restaurants, museum

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ICONIC

# 5 PENANG FERRIES TO BE TURNED INTO TOURISM PRODUCTS

They will be handed to successful firms to be transformed into floating museum, restaurants, tourist ferries

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**F**IVE of the decommissioned iconic car-carrying ferries will be handed over to successful companies on July 1 to be transformed into floating museums, floating restaurants and tourist ferries.

Of the five, one will be transformed into a floating museum, while two each will be transformed into floating restaurants and tourist ferries.

Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng said PPC had called for a request for proposal (RFP) between January and March 18 this year to turn the century-old ferries into floating museums, floating restaurants and tourist ferries.

He said many proposals were received.

"After assessment by committees in PPC, the board of directors, in its meeting recently, had approved qualified companies to refurbish and manage the five iconic ferries.

"PPC and the qualified companies will sign a contract for a 10-year-lease, with an option to extend for another five years.

"Our main mission now is to ensure the five ferries continue to have their presence in Penang waters. I believe these ferries will be an important tourism product and a new tourism icon for the state. This will further boost the tourism sector in the state and stimulate the economy," he said yesterday.

Tan said due to the Covid-19 pandemic and movement restrictions, PPC would set up a special team to assist the qualified companies.

He said if the ongoing total lockdown moved to its second phase, then PPC would have a ceremony to handover the iconic ferries on July 1. Otherwise, the ceremony would be held online.

"The qualified companies have been given between three and six months to repair and refurbish the century-old ferries be-

fore they operate," he added.

On Jan 27 this year, PPC announced that it would call for a RFP to turn the ferries, which were phased out on New Year's Day, into floating museums, floating restaurants or tourist ferries.

The RFP was to implement Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong's decision, taking into account cultural and heritage sentiments of Penangites towards the ferries.

After nearly a century of service, Penang's iconic ferries ceased operations on Dec 31 last year.

Starting from Jan 1, Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB), which took over the ferry services from Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, began operating fast passenger boats between the mainland and the island, while one of the ferries, *Pulau Angsa*, was used to transport only motorcycles and bicycles.

This is only in the interim before PPSB introduces passenger-only water buses and vehicle transporters by July next year.

Last Christmas eve, Wee said to preserve a slice of history unique to Penang, a process would be initiated to seek proposals to convert the ferries into floating restaurants, museums, and/or tourist cruises as suggested by various parties to highlight the vessels' contribution to the cultural and heritage identity of the state.

He had also given his assurance that Penang's 126-year-old ferry service, the oldest in the country, would be continued and modernised with priority given to passenger safety and comfort.

Photos of the "tilting" *Pulau Pinang* ferry, which went viral earlier this month, set tongues

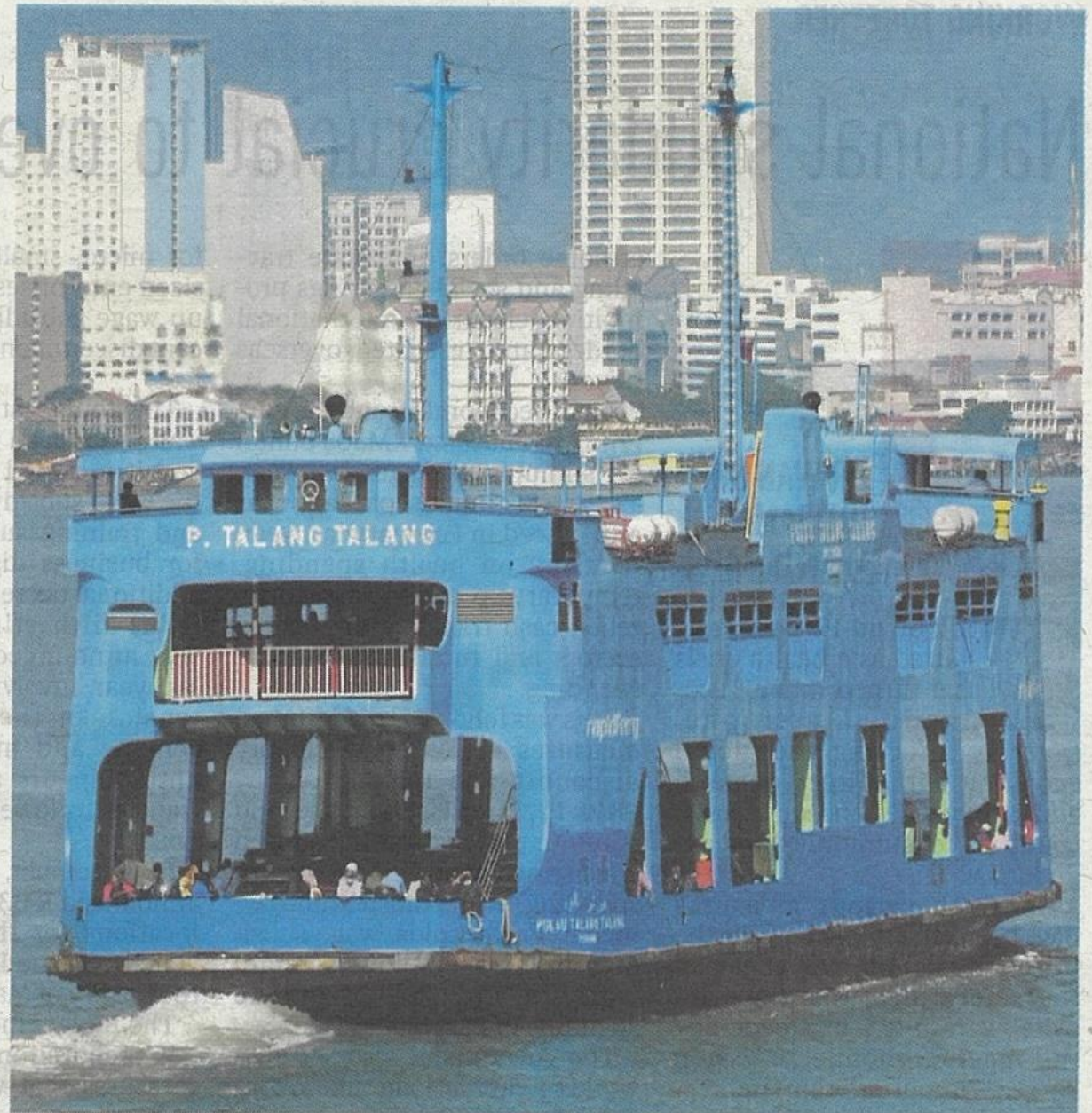
wagging. Many quarters had voiced concerns and questioned the fate of the once-popular car-carrying ferry, which is rich in heritage.

The ferry, which was partly submerged after water entered it through holes and filled its engine room, is berthed at the Bagan Dalam dockyard in Butterworth.

Repair work on the ferry, which was successfully refloated on June 8, is in the final stages before the ferry is moved to the Tanjung City Marina here.

PPC had confirmed that the ferry had several holes in it, which resulted in water entering and filling its engine room.

The aged *Pulau Pinang* ferry had not been in operations since the end of 2019. Due to the unavailability of spare parts and the fact that its engine could no longer be repaired, it was sent to the dockyard on Nov 27, 2019.



A ferry carrying vehicles and passengers to Penang island in December last year.  
 BERNAMA PIC



Datuk Tan Teik Cheng