



Awaiting restoration

Several companies have responded to a Request for Proposal to turn five of Penang's retired ferries into new floating attractions. One will be converted into a museum, two becoming restaurants and another two to serve as tourist ferries.

— CHAN BOON KAI/The Star >4

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Penang Port tenders out ferries

The move is aimed at repurposing the usage of the iconic vessels

By R. SEKARAN

rsekaran@thestar.com.my

PENANG Port Commission (PPC) will tender out five of the iconic Penang ferries to private companies on July 1.

The private companies which are eligible will convert the ferries to a floating museum, two floating restaurants and two tourist ferries.

PPC chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng said the commission had called for a Request for Proposal from Jan 29 to March 18 and received proposals from several companies.

"After evaluation by several PPC committees, the board of directors in mid-June approved the proposals of a few companies for the refurbishment and operation of the ferries," said Tan in a statement yesterday.

"A 10-year agreement with an option for extending another five years was signed with the eligible companies."

The companies, said Tan, were given a period of three to five months to repair and refurbish the ferries before commencing operation.

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a special committee has been formed to assist the companies in their preparation for the takeover of the ferries," he said.

Tan added that a special online ceremony would be held on July 1 if the movement control order is still in effect to officially hand over the ferries to the companies.

"The immediate aim of PPC is to see the five iconic ferries emerging again in Penang waters to attract tourists to the state."

Since Jan 1, only one of the iconic ferries, is plying between the island and mainland carrying two-wheelers.

A Ro-Ro boat is being used to carry two-wheelers with pedestrians while fast boats are used for foot passengers to travel between the island and mainland.



Three of the five Penang ferries berthed at the Sultan Abdul Halim ferry terminal in Butterworth.

All four-wheelers are presently using the two Penang bridges to cross over the Penang channel.

Meanwhile, the state government had announced that the ferry charges for pedestrians taking the ferry is free from July 1 to Dec 31.

The move is in line with the My30 pass on Rapid Penang public buses which was launched on March 1.

State infrastructure and transport committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari said the move would further help a seamless and comprehensive transport, both on land and sea for people of Penang.

"Those taking the ferry need only to tap their MyKad at the booth manned by Penang Port Sdn Bhd before boarding the ferry."

The state, said Zairil, would incur a cost of RM78,000 for 65,000 tickets a month with an accumulated sum of RM468,000.

"A committee has been formed to assist the companies in their preparation for the takeover of the ferries."

Datuk Tan Teik Cheng

"We hope the move would help ease the burden of pedestrians who are commuting to work daily via the ferry and public transport during these difficult times."



Tan (left) chatting with a ferry passenger at Swettenham Pier, Penang.