



Looking ship-shape: Ferry crew inside one of the vessels, preparing for the big day on Monday – CHAN BOON KAI/The Star

All systems go for new ferry service

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GEORGE TOWN: On Monday, a new era in cross-channel transit will begin as the modern fleet of Penang ferries makes its debut.

Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) chief executive officer Datuk Sasedharan Vasudevan said the ferry service has been given conditional approval by the Marine Department.

“We are ready for the first trip, although there are still some minor issues that need to be ironed out first,” he said.

He added that for the maiden trip, commuters will board the ferry from the Pengkalan Sultan Abdul Halim on the mainland to the Pengkalan Raja Uda terminal on the island at 6.30am.

The four ferries named after local places – *Teluk Kumbar*, *Teluk Bahang*, *Teluk Duyung* and *Teluk Kampi* – arrived at the Butterworth Wharf from the Haiphong shipyard in Vietnam last month.

Three of the four ferries will be operational starting Monday, with one on standby. Each ferry costs



Set to sail: A new ferry at the Raja Uda terminal in Weld Quay. The old ferry can be seen in the background.

RM18mil.

Besides the ferry purchase, the terminals at both ends were also upgraded at a cost of RM30mil, with air-conditioned waiting rooms for passengers, WiFi and phone-charging facilities, and food outlets.

Commuters will enjoy free rides for a month, with the service running from 6am to 8.30pm.

Each vessel can accommodate 150 passengers and 50 motorcycles and bicycles (only two-wheel-

ers) in a one-way trip of 10 minutes, half that of the old ferries.

The new ferry rates are yet to be announced but Transport Minister Anthony Loke has promised that the rates will be reasonable.

All the old Penang ferries have been retired, with the last one decommissioned in December 2022.

Motorists and drivers of other vehicles will have to use the two bridges to cross the channel.