



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press statement

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The authorities have to consider maintaining ferry service while upgrading ferry terminal in stages

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) welcomes the Transport Ministry's announcement that Penang ferry services will not be suspended as earlier planned for three months, beginning 1 September, for upgrading works at the ferry terminals.

Replacing the current ferries with twin-hulled catamarans is the recent move as catamarans are known to be energy efficient.

Ferry service should be continued, uninterrupted; only closing the ferry berth at the terminal where upgrading work is being carried out while the other unaffected berth remains operational. This would minimise the inconvenience to the commuters.

The reason for our call for the continuation of the ferry services during the upgrading exercise is because a ferry's maximum capacity is 300 passengers while a bus can only take a maximum of 49 and this would pose a problem during peak hours. It would take about five bus trips to transport the commuters, compared to one ferry trip assuming no social distancing.

If the Penang ferry services had to be suspended for upgrading, the relevant authorities have to publicly announce alternative transportation plans so that ferry users can plan their travelling time. This is particularly important for pedestrian commuters who had to go to work or to catch another transport.

With the suspension of ferry services, we can expect much heavier traffic heading to the bridges and there should be plans for unforeseen circumstances such as traffic accidents or heavy traffic. Traffic updates must be made available for people to plan their journey and avoid traffic jam.

Catamarans have been proposed to replace the current ferries and we hope that those involved in the maintenance of the new fleet will include preventive maintenance in their standard operating procedure (SOP) and groom new staff to replace those who retire or resign.

We also urge the government to keep the iconic Penang ferry. The state cannot let the iconic Penang ferry which is the oldest ferry service in the country fade into history. At least maintain two ferries to help promote the state image. The ferry service, started in 1894, is intimately linked to the heritage of Penang. It is almost as old as that of Hong Kong's Star Ferry which started just 14 years earlier. Hongkongers are fiercely proud of their ferry and promote it extensively while our authorities perceive ours as a liability.

We wish to reiterate our call to the relevant authorities to try to maintain the ferry service while upgrading is in progress. It is pertinent to make their alternative transportation plans for ferry commuters public to enable people schedule their travelling time. There is also a need to keep the historic ferries even if the government wants to introduce catamarans.

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