



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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CAP Calls for Answers over Penang Ferry Collision

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is shocked by the collision between the Penang ferry and the vessel identified by the media as *MV Mekar Jaya* on 1 September 2026 within the Penang Port limits, near the Sultan Abdul Halim Ferry Terminal (PSAH). The incident resulted in 21 passengers on board the ferry being injured.

The incident could have been disastrous. According to information in the public domain, the chemical tanker *MV Mekar Jaya* is about 1.5 times the gross tonnage of the *Teluk Bahang* ferry. The two vessels also differ considerably in their dimensions and functions, making the safe management of vessel movements in the channel particularly important.

CAP welcomes the Penang Port Commission's (PPC) investigation into the incident and urges it to take all necessary measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Such incidents are highly preventable, particularly with the implementation of the PPC's first Vessel Traffic Management System (VTMS) in June 2026 as part of efforts to enhance safety, efficiency and sustainability at Penang Port.

The VTMS has the capability to monitor vessel movements through systems such as radar and the Automatic Identification System (AIS). Its records could potentially establish the positions, speeds, headings and movements of both vessels before the collision. The AIS and radar records may also help determine whether the vessels were on a collision course and at what point the developing danger should have become apparent.

CAP therefore urges the PPC to establish whether the VTMS was monitoring the two vessels at the time of the incident and, if so, what information was available to the VTMS operators in the minutes leading up to the collision. It is also important to establish whether any warning or communication was issued to either vessel before the collision.

However, the VTMS should not be regarded as a substitute for the responsibility of the vessel's master and crew. As we understand it, the system provides situational awareness and assists in the monitoring and management of vessel traffic, while responsibility for navigation and collision avoidance ultimately remains with the vessels' crew.

The investigation should therefore examine not only the actions of the ferry and *MV Mekar Jaya* but also whether the existing traffic-management arrangements, including the newly implemented VTMS, functioned effectively.

CAP believes that the findings of the investigation should be made public. The public has a right to know what caused the collision, whether adequate safety measures were in place and whether any failure in navigation, communication, traffic management or other procedures contributed to the incident. The findings should also help to prevent such incidents in the future. In the meantime, those responsible for the collision must be held accountable.

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