



A fast passenger ferry docked at Pangkalan Sultan Abdul Halim in Butterworth, Penang on Jan 1. BERNAMA PIC

VENTILATION ISSUES

Penang's fast passenger ferries a virus time bomb?

GEORGE TOWN: The fast passenger ferry services that had begun operations since New Year's Day were implemented without considering crucial factors to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) said there were no physical distancing measures in place for the entire travel process; right from the speedboats to the shuttle buses to the station in Weld Quay.

"This is shocking in light of the current massive spikes in Covid-19 cases that the country is now experiencing," CAP president Mohideen Abdul Kader said.

Mohideen added that commuters on the speedboats had to sit close to one another in an enclosed environment.

"In such an environment, the spread of any airborne disease,

including Covid-19, would be worse than the well-ventilated 'old' car-carrying ferries that we had.

"The old ferries had physical distancing measures (marked seats and floors to avoid close-contact when sitting and queuing). The new ones do not.

"The shuttle bus is often packed with passengers, who have to wait on board for some time before it moves as the bus follows a schedule. This puts passengers at further risk."

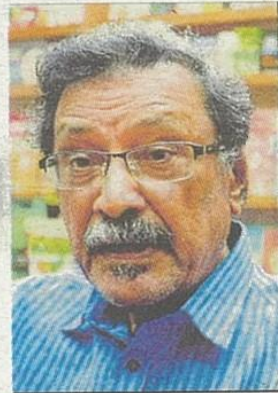
Mohideen said the speedboat was also not meant for bigger sized people because all the seats

were 40cm wide.

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

Beginning Jan 1, Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB), which took over the ferry service, only operates fast passenger ferries to replace the phased out iconic car-carrying ferries, while one of the old ferries continues to transport motorcycles and bicycles.

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



Mohideen Abdul Kader