

NATION

Penang gov't mulling taking over iconic ferries if 'gifted' to state [NSTTV]



By **Audrey Dermawan**
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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang government will consider taking over the iconic ferry service if the federal government has no plans to continue with it.

This was decided during Wednesday's state executive council meeting.

State Infrastructure and Transportation Committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari said the state government fully understands the sentiments of Penangites who are against stopping the iconic ferry service.

"As such, as part of efforts to preserve the iconic ferry service, the state exco, which met on Wednesday, has decided that if the federal government is not interested in proceeding with the iconic ferry service, then the state government will consider taking over the ownership of the said ferries.

"Since the Penang Port Commission (PPC) and the Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) have no plans to retain the iconic ferry service as a transportation mode, then the state government suggests that these ferries be 'gifted' to the state and her people," he said today.

Zairil said he would liaise with the PPC to discuss the state government's suggestion.

After nearly a century of service, the car-carrying ferries ceased operations on Dec 31, last year.

From Jan 1, this year, PPSB, which took over the ferry services, only operated fast passenger ferries between the Pangkalan Sultan Abdul Halim ferry terminal in Butterworth and the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) here, while one of the existing iconic car-carrying ferries used to transport bicycles and motorcycles.

The interim plan is expected to continue until PPSB introduces the use of passenger-only water buses and vehicle transporters by July 2022.

There were numerous instances in the past when the state government had publicly said it would not take over the running of the iconic ferry service.

It was also reported that the state government had expressed willingness to take over the ferry service back in 2016.

However, in 2017, former chief minister Lim Guan Eng said that the takeover plan was put on hold until further discussions with then Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

However, in March 2019, Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said that the state government would not take over the ferry service.

He said that this was because a study conducted by the state government found that the ferry services would make a loss of between RM10 million and RM15 million a year.

Again in October, last year, Chow reiterated that the state government had no plans to take over the ferry service.



Penang Infrastructure and Transportation Committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari says the state government will consider taking over the ownership of the iconic ferry service.
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