



An artist's impression of Pengkal Raja Tun Uda ferry terminal's waiting area after the upgrade.

By R. SEKARAN

rsekaran@thestar.com.my

THE upgrading work of Penang ferry terminals is now 60% complete and the project is expected to wrap up by August.

High-speed WiFi for commuters will be one of the new features at the state-of-the-art facilities.

A new era in cross-channel commuting awaits travellers as the major changes to the ferry service will allow them to go from the island to the mainland and vice versa quicker than driving across one of the two bridges.

Four new high-capacity, modern-day ferries are being custom-built for Penang to transport large numbers of people and even motorcycles and bicycles each trip, at speeds that the ferries of yesterday would never have achieved.

And the waiting areas at the ferry terminals would even have carpeting, assured Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairman Datuk Tan Teik Cheng.

"We are looking at 400sq metres of modern terminals with air-conditioned waiting areas equipped with WiFi, phone charging docks and facilities for disabled persons," he said in a press conference after taking the media on a tour of the upgrading works at the terminals last Saturday.

He highlighted that work was on schedule and the terminals would be ready by the end of August.

Once completed, he said, both Pengkal Sultan Abdul Halim ferry terminal on the mainland and Pengkal Raja Tun Uda ferry terminal on the island would have facilities similar to an airport, with fully carpeted floors and cafes.

"The retail area at Pengkal Sultan Abdul Halim terminal in Butterworth, Penang, will be located on the first floor and consist of 16 stalls, while the Pengkal Raja Tun Uda terminal on the island will have 25 retail outlets.

"We forecast 1,643,919 passengers boarding the ferry in 2023, and it will increase to 1,685,430 in 2028.

"Vehicles (bicycles and motorcycles) are expected to see a volume

# Ferry terminal upgrades on course

## Embark on new era of commuting come August



of 680,000 to 711,000 units next year, with the volume maintaining between 693,135 and 700,000 units in 2028," he added.

On the acquisition of the new ferries, Tan said the Federal Government gave RM15mil last year.

"We will be giving another RM15mil this year, but only for the purchase of the new ferries from The Netherlands.

"The upgrading cost of the terminals are borne by the operator, Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB)," he said.

PPSB, in May last year, said the cost of upgrading the terminals would be around RM20mil with another RM60mil for the procurement of water vehicles.



In December, PPCB said the ferry service would see a RM100mil makeover, including the arrival of a fleet of four new ferries costing RM16mil each.

The four ferries will be ready for

Pengkal Sultan Abdul Halim ferry terminal in Butterworth seen here with Penang Sentral in the background. (Left) Tan says the upgraded terminals will have carpeted floors and cafes, similar to an airport. — Photos by LIM BENG TATT/The Star

service by mid-2023.

The new ferries can take about 250 passengers, plus two-wheelers.

Most of the old Penang ferries were retired in December 2020, with only a single ferry in service now, carrying two-wheelers.

Pedestrians cross the channel on fast boats.

All four-wheelers currently use one of Penang's two bridges to cross the channel.