

# Free rides in Penang during Thaipusam

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**BUTTERWORTH:** With free ferry rides and shuttle bus services available during Thaipusam, many devotees are expected to use public transport to reduce traffic congestion.

Factory technician R. Suresh, 41, said the 50-hour free ferry rides would benefit not only the locals but those from other states as well.

"It is a good move. Besides encouraging the use of public transport, it can also reduce traffic congestion en route to the temples in Penang.

"After coming to Penang island via the ferry, one can take the feeder bus service to reach the Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Hilltop Temple and Nattukotai Chettiar Temple in Jalan Kebun Bunga.

"And both services are free of charge during this period," said Suresh, who lives in Bagan Ajam on Penang mainland.

For the first time ever, free ferry rides will be provided for commuters starting from 12.01am on Jan 24 to 2am on Jan 26 during



the Thaipusam celebrations.

Upon reaching the ferry terminal on Penang island, the public can also enjoy free shuttle bus service from Rapid Penang to go to the temples in Jalan Kebun Bunga.

The feeder buses will run from 2pm on Jan 24 to 1am on Jan 25, and from 5.30am on Jan 25 to 1am on Jan 26. Thaipusam falls on Jan 25.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke, in announcing the initiative, said those coming from the Penang mainland could get to the temples without using their own vehicles.

He said the measures proposed

by the Penang Port Commission and Penang Port Sdn Bhd were part of the government's effort to reduce traffic congestion and encourage the use of public transport.

"With the free services, we hope they can facilitate movement.

"The free services will also be extended to other festivities, which will be announced from time to time," he told a press conference after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Railway Assets Corporation (RAC) and Penang Housing Board (LPNPP) for a development project in Kampung

## **Good news:**

For the first time, free ferry rides will be provided for commuters during Thaipusam.  
— Filepic

Manis, Prai, here at The Light Hotel in Butterworth yesterday.

In its modernisation exercise, Penang has been using four new ferries, costing RM18mil each, to ferry commuters across the North Channel since last year. Each new ferry can accommodate 250 passengers plus 50 two-wheelers.

In a separate development, Loke said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had instructed the Transport Ministry to table a Cabinet memo on the state's Light Rail Transit (LRT) project.

He said the memo would be presented to the Cabinet for approval.

The Penang LRT is expected to begin earlier than planned, following an agreement between the federal and state governments to build the LRT depot on existing land rather than the originally planned reclaimed area in Penang's south.

Originally spanning from Penang International Airport to Komtar in the first phase, the LRT line will now be extended to Tanjung Bungah.

The initial phase will include the construction of 27 multi-storey stations along the 29km route.