

Penang ferry service hits five million ridership mark

Smooth ride: One of the ferries servicing the route.



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GEORGE TOWN: The new ferry service in Penang between Butterworth and the island has surpassed the five million passenger mark after less than two years in operation.

It's a milestone for the service, which began on Aug 7, 2023, replacing the previous fleet of iconic Penang ferries.

Most ferry passengers say they are happy with the enhanced efficiency and comfort.

"It's faster, punctual and cleaner compared to what we experienced in the past," said nurse Emyliyana Abdul Razak, 22.

The current system, she said, was a major improvement over the previous one.

"It is also user-friendly as passengers can now purchase tickets using debit cards without having to queue at the ticket counter.

"The process is faster and much more convenient, especially for frequent commuters like me," she said when met at the Sultan Abdul Halim Ferry Terminal in Butterworth.

Emyliyana, who has been living in Bandar Perda, Bukit Mertajam, for the past six years, hoped the ferry service would continue to evolve into one of the key transportation networks in the region.

At present, the operation involves four ferries running on a rotational basis, with three operating during peak hours and two during off-peak periods, from as early as 6am until 9.30pm.

Three ferries will operate daily with one on stand-by.

The four ferries in the fleet are *Teluk Kampi*, *Teluk Bahang*, *Teluk Duyung* and *Teluk Kumbar*.

Another passenger, M. Murugaiyah, 70, said the service had long been essential.

"The fast ferries are an improvement, but there's still room for growth," he said.

For instance, he suggested that clearer signage be put up for first-time users.

"There should also be more frequent trips during peak hours," he added.

Richard Teh, 45, was pleased with the service as well.

"The ride is smooth and efficient, but extending operating



Huge milestone: Passengers walking past during the ceremony at the Sultan Abdul Halim Ferry Terminal in Butterworth, Penang. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

hours, especially on weekends and holidays, will benefit both locals and visitors.

"The demand is there. If the service is reliable and accessible at all times, more people will choose the ferry over other modes of transport," the technician added.

He was also of the view that facilities should be improved for the elderly and disabled.

A ceremony was held yesterday at the Sultan Abdul Halim Ferry Terminal by Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) to celebrate the five million ferry ridership milestone.

Passengers were welcomed by

Penang Port chairman and director Datuk Seri Syed Mohamad Syed Murtaza and its chief executive officer, Datuk Sasedharan Vasudevan, at the ferry terminal.

Sasedharan said the five-million passenger mark was a positive development in the state's transportation sector.

He said pedestrians made up 74% of the total, while motorcycles and bicycles accounted for the remaining 26%.

"If we compare the number of passengers from January to March last year with the same period this year, there's an increase of nearly 6%.

"This clearly shows that the ferry service is well-received by the people of Penang as well as tourists and visitors to the state," he told reporters.

However, he noted that the company was still running a loss, due to high operational costs, despite the increase in ridership.

He said PPSB would intensify promotional efforts for the ferry service across the state, including through strategic collaborations with Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd for advertising on ETS trains, as well as with Tourism Malaysia to reach a wider number of passengers.