Persatuan Penumpang Pengangkutan Awam Pulau Pinang
Penang Public Transport Users Association

PRESS STATEMENT

Date: 31 July 2020

PeTUA is observing the current development closely about Rapid Ferry after we learned that Prasarana is going to hand back the operations of Penang Ferry Service after taking it over from MMC just mere 3 years ago.

A day after the news broke about the impending return to Penang Port Commission, more dire news came to our knowledge that only 1 vessel left worthy to serve people of Penang which led to hourly service from what used to run every 20minutes, thus making time to cross the Penang straits for most public transport users become more than 1.5 hours on average.

This inefficiency in public transport connection could led to more private vehicle driving into the Penang Island which its road had been suffering from traffic even more overcrowded as the public transport users' only all-day link to their employment centres in the Island had been indirectly cut off.

Prasarana Malaysia Berhad, again had become a convenient scapegoat for the recent failure, as the ferry service was handed to them in already dire condition, where vessels left to them required major overhaul before being put back into service. Not to mention 2 of the vessels named Pulau Rimau and Pulau Rawa had been sold off by Penang Port prior to the handover. Frequent patrons of Queensbay Mall would know that Pulau Rimau had been docked beside the Queensbay reclamation project since a year ago.

Back in August 2018, then Transport Minister Anthony Loke had announced RM90mil allocation to upgrade Penang's ferry service, which had never seen the light of the day even till this day. From our insider source, the announced RM90mil allocation is not coming from the Transport Ministry nor the Finance Ministry, but rather should be coming from Prasarana's already cash strapped budget themselves.

MMC Corp, the parent company of then Penang Ferry Service operator before the handover, Penang Port Sdn Bhd, conveniently reported net profit surge by 59.8% on the fourth quarter (4Q) after the handover, where in the filing with Bursa Malaysia, attributed the improved performance to the full consolidation of Penang Port Sdn Bhd's result among other attributes.

It does come to question; shouldn't the Penang Port Commission make profit sharing of MMC Corp's profit from Penang Port Sdn Bhd mandatory to help fund and expand the century old Penang Ferry Service?

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As the Penang Ferry Service is a vital link for many of the public transport users accessing their employment centres, PeTUA wishes to see the follow action being taken by PPC, Prasarana & Penang State Government

- Introduce frequent shuttle service between bus hubs across Island and Seberang Perai, ideally to allow commuters access to different part of Island & Seberang Perai without the need to changing bus at Penang Sentral and/or Komtar
- Renegotiate terms with Prasarana on operation of Rapid Ferry. Making profit sharing from Penang Port Sdn Bhd mandatory to help fund public utilities such as the Ferry. It will be the first in Malaysia of such a scheme.
- Set a timeline for replacement of aging and unreliable vessels

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