



Transport Minister Anthony Loke (third from right) with (from left) MMC Corp Bhd group managing director Datuk Seri Che Khalib Mohamad Noh, Penang Port Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Syed Mohamad Syed Murtaza, Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, Transport Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim and MMC Port Holding Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Ian Brian James after a joint venture signing ceremony in George Town yesterday. PIC BY RAMDZAN MASIAM

BERTH EXTENSION

SWETTENHAM PIER TERMINAL UPGRADE

PPSB, RCCL to invest RM155m in redevelopment

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PENANG Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) and Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd (RCCL) will jointly invest RM155 million to expand the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT).

The year-long redevelopment plan includes extending the existing berth to 660m from 400m and once completed, it will enable SPCT to berth two of RCCL's new mega cruise vessels at the same time.

RCCL's new mega cruise ships can carry more than 4,900 passengers each.

In addition to berth extension, the terminal will be improved to enable it to handle 12,000 passengers at any given time.

MMC Corp Bhd group managing director Datuk Seri Che Khalib Mohamad Noh said the idea of a joint venture between PPSB and RCCL to redevelop the SPCT came about from the encouraging numbers recorded by the cruise terminal.

PPSB is part of the MMC group.

"Since it began operations in 2010, the SPCT had handled more than one million passengers annually. Last year, we recorded passenger growth of 19.1 per cent with almost 2,000 ship calls.

"This year, despite no cruise ships having a home port in Penang, we still anticipate more than a million passengers through our terminal," said Che Khalib at the signing ceremony, here, yesterday.

Also present were Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Transport Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim, Marine Department director-general Datuk Baharin Abdul Hamid, Penang Port Commission general manager Mohamad Puzi Mohamad Nazir, PPSB chairman Datuk Syed Mohamad Syed Murtaza and RCCL senior vice-president international Gavin Smith.

Che Khalib said surveys showed that each passenger would usually spend about US\$70 (RM280) while in Penang, compared to the global average of about US\$150 per person.

"The cruise industry is rapidly expanding and has brought cruise tourism into Malaysia to a whole new level. Penang Port is proud to be part of this commitment together with RCCL," he added.

Meanwhile, Smith said RCCL had invested US\$800 million in facilities worldwide to enable big ships to berth as well as improve the ground logistics.

"We have identified Penang as a potential investment destination very early on in developing our Southeast Asia strategy," he noted.

Loke said Malaysia had been making waves in the cruise sector, with a total of 599 cruise calls in its ports last year, compared with 359 in 2013.

"Penang is the top port of call in Southeast Asia, followed by Port Klang," he said.