

Local

Labuan ferry terminal ready for use early Feb

Sohan Das

LABUAN: The new RM5.8 million ro-ro ferry terminal which will house the ticketing counters and other facilities, including CIQ services, will be ready for use by early February, Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri said.

This was among the steps taken by the Ministry to improve facilities at the terminal for the convenience of travellers.

"We should also appreciate the goodwill of the Sabah government in allowing berthing rights to two additional ro-ro ferries and a passenger boat at Menumbok as this would end the longstanding public demand for such services," said Rahim.

He said if the additional operators were "creative" enough they could benefit from the growing trade between Labuan and Sabah and this would be eventually good for all.

A point to be considered was that when the ro-ro ferry first began operations the Labuan population was merely more than 30,000. But now it is around 80,000 and we see further growth and increased demand in the near future, said Rahim.

Regarding the three ro-ro operators offered contracts, he said he had been told that all three had responded positively through the Sabah Port and Harbour Department before the deadline.

All three must comply to certain conditions in operating the service and one was a standard charge of transportation.

As for the two new operators not having ferries, Rahim said the matter could be sorted out by the operators and the State. The other step considered to improve the service was to dredge on Labuan's side to "straighten" the route. This would reduce travelling time between Labuan-Menumbok by half an hour. The present journey takes one-and-a-half hours.

He said the project cost RM20 million and the Marine Department was studying the matter.

Responding to a question on whether the ro-ro ferry terminal which sits right in the centre of town and caused traffic problems would be shifted, he said it was a matter for Labuan Corporation to consider and the Marine Department could help.

Rahim said with additional ferries about to operate between here and Menumbok and the ro-ro ferry now operating between Labuan and Muara in Brunei, Labuan was better connected and this would, in turn, help tourism and trade.

The Minister was accompanied by the Director-General of the department Datuk Capt Ahmad Othman and the Member of Parliament, Datuk Haji Yussof Mahal and Chairman of LC Advisory Board, Datuk Haji Yunus Kurus.