

Two contrasting ferry tales

From the sea, one will rise as a museum and the other as scrap

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GEORGE TOWN: Once the pride of Penang, two iconic ferries – *Pulau Pinang* and *Pulau Kapas* – are now in deeply troubled waters.

But while one is destined to rise again, the other's fate has been sealed.

Pulau Kapas almost completely sank and is destined for the scrapyard.

On the other hand, *Pulau Pinang*, which was partially submerged off the coast here earlier, will be floated for repairs once the tide is favourable.

The ferry, which is being converted to a floating museum, is now "sitting" on uneven muddy ground near the Tanjung City Marina.

The museum operator, Print-hero Merchandise Sdn Bhd, said the opening of the museum has been rescheduled to February instead of the year-end.

Its chief executive officer Abdul Hadi Abu Osman said repairs to the *Pulau Pinang* are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

He said the ferry was towed away from the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) because the water there was 8m deep and the vessel, which had sprung a leak, could sink.

"The ferry will be floated when the tide is high so we can see



In troubled waters: Seawater flooding the deck of the 'Pulau Pinang' near the SPCT in George Town. A vintage car is seen partially submerged in the beleaguered upcoming floating museum. – LO TERN CHERN/The Star

where the leak is exactly. Once that is done, we can proceed with repair works," he said.

Abdul Hadi said the current salvage efforts costs RM30,000 per day, with over RM300,000 already spent since the leak was discovered.

"Our original budget for repair and refurbishment was RM2mil. Now we need to spend a few millions more due to the damage caused by the seawater.

- "All the electrical equipment and furnishings, including two vintage cars, were affected when water surged onto the decks.

"Our objective is to restore this iconic ferry and showcase Penang's rich culture and history to tourists," he said.

On Oct 3, the ferry, to be named the "Penang Ferry Museum", was towed across the Penang Strait from the Bagan Dalam slipway on the mainland to SPCT on the

island. However, it started tilting and taking in water.

Meanwhile, *Pulau Kapas*, which sank on July 24, is currently being scrapped at the Butterworth Wharf.

The ferry is being dismantled piece by piece, with sections lifted by crane onto a barge. The remnants will be sold for scrap.

Pictures of the submerged ferry have circulated widely on social media since Wednesday.