

## MEGA CRUISE SHIPS

# RCCL TO INVEST IN MELAKA PORTS NEXT

Malaysia a key hub in S-E Asia for Royal Caribbean Cruise, says Asia Pacific MD

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**R**OYAL Caribbean Cruise Ltd (RCCL) plans to invest in ports in Melaka next, following its RM155 million joint venture with Penang Port Sdn Bhd to expand the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) in Penang in September last year.

RCCL Asia Pacific managing director Angie Stephen said stressed the importance of Malaysia in its overall development in Southeast Asia, as close to 90 per cent of all of its cruises in the region would stop in the country.

"Malaysia is the core of our products, here. In terms of priority market, where we want to continue the partnership with the Federal and state governments, it is here," she said during a media gathering, here, yesterday.

"We bring 300,000 guests to

Malaysia each year and our guests spend an average of RM200 to RM400 per person in shopping, dining and excursion.

"As we continue to grow the infrastructure and bring bigger ships, this will create more economic opportunities as well."

The SPCT redevelopment plans, which is expected to be completed by September, include extending the existing berth to 660m from the current 400m to enable SPCT to berth two of

RCCL's new mega cruise vessels at the same time.

RCCL's new mega cruise ships



Angie Stephen



Royal Caribbean Cruise Ltd plans to focus on expanding its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions business.

can carry more than 4,900 passengers each.

In addition to the berth extension, there will also be an improvement to the terminal, which will enable SPCT to handle 12,000 passengers at any given time.

Meanwhile, Stephen said the company planned to focus on expanding its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) business outside Singapore this year as part of efforts to diversify its volume growth, which is growing at a low single digit.

She said the company could help generate volume during the off-peak season by hosting corporations on board.

"MICE has always been a piece of the business we are interested in and we see emerging demand and opportunity.

"We have reorganised our Singapore operations to have a dedicated team that will focus on growing the MICE business outside Singapore. We see a lot of growth opportunity because of the high number of corporations in Malaysia," said Stephen.