

Weekly ferry service may start in Jan

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KOCHI: The Kochi-Male ferry service has finally become a reality with the officials of the Cochin Port Trust (CPT) and the Maldives Port Limited (MPL) finalizing the agreement in this regard. According to the officials in the CPT, the weekly ferry service will begin by January or February 2012.

Prime minister [Manmohan Singh](#) had announced the decision to start the ferry service, during the SAARC summit held at Male. With the new ferry service, a new trade route between India and Maldives will be opened, which in turn will boost the tourism sector. It is anticipated that the ferry service will also give a fillip to the cargo movement from Kochi to Male.

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Initially, there will be a weekly cargo-cum-passenger service from Kochi port to Kulhuduffushi port in Male with a transit time of one day. The ferry will carry about 300 passengers, 15 to 20 containers and about 500 tonnes of cargo.

After the two-day discussions with the MPL officials that began on Thursday, CPT chairman Paul Antony said the Shipping Corporation of India would invite Expression of Interest (EoI) and identify an operator to take up the ferry service. "Once confirmation is received from the Maldivian side, the EoI will be published," he said.

The ferry service will be from the BTP jetty at the Kochi port and it will use cruise terminal facility, which is being developed. The ferry will ply between Kochi-Male-Kochi and later will be extended to Kulhuduffushi Port when the port expansion work is completed.

Kochi: The Kochi-Male ferry service has finally become a reality as the officials of Cochin Port Trust (CPT) and the Maldives Port Limited (MPL) have finalised the agreements in this regarding. According to the officials in CPT, the weekly ferry service will set sail by January or February next year.

The decision to start the ferry service follows the announcement on the same that was made by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the SAARC summit held at Male. With the new ferry service, a new trade route between India and Maldives will be open, which will also boost the tourism sector. It is anticipated that the ferry service will bring up the potential of cargo movement from Cochin to Male.

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The ferry service that will begin next year will be berthed at the BTP Jetty at the Kochi Port and will use Cruise Terminal facility, being developed at a cost of Rs. 7 crore. The port officials expect to complete the work on the cruise terminal by March, 2012. The service that will ply between Kochi-Male-Kochi will be extended to Kulhuduffushi Port when the port expansion work is completed.