

Khir Toyo cleans up massage parlours
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Selangor has launched a clean-up of its massage parlours to curb illicit sex and the spread of diseases amid a tourism drive.

Menteri Besar Mohamad Khir Toyo said only certified masseuses would be allowed to work and operate spas, which would help shut down illegal, sex-oriented massage parlours.

"Most people want a good rub down, someone to knead their aching muscles. Our regulations ensure that the massage parlours provide authentic massage and not entice their customers into vice activities," he was quoted as saying in the Star daily.

"From May, those wanting to work as a masseuse in the state must have a certificate from a certified training centre," he said.

Medical tests

Besides being certified, masseuses in Selangor, one of Malaysia's more wealthy and developed states, will have to undergo medical tests to make sure they are disease-free.

"We want to ensure that the masseuse who has close contact with the customers does not pass on a disease," he said.

Khir said the clean-up was also necessary with massage gaining recognition as an alternative therapy and an expected influx of tourists to Malaysia this year amid a nationwide tourism push.

"With Visit Malaysia Year, tourists visiting Selangor should be treated to the best massage techniques," he said.

Malaysian massage parlours have traditionally had a sleazy reputation as fronts for illegal sex workers.

However, like its neighbours Thailand and Indonesia, Malaysia has become home to an increasing number of spas and health resorts as wealthy Malaysians seek massages to alleviate stress.

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