

**Khalid Samad visits brewery on 'fact-finding mission'**  
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Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad went against conventions and broke taboos when he organised a working visit to the Carlsberg brewery in Shah Alam recently.

carlsberg factory in malaysia 290904The PAS central political bureau member had gone to the beer factory yesterday afternoon on a 'fact-finding' mission on whether the brewery can move elsewhere.

Being one of the rare Muslim politicians to organise an excursion to the factory - where most of its products are haram - Khalid took even the Carlsberg people by surprise.

According to the lawmaker's blog, Carlsberg Brewery Malaysia Bhd deputy managing director Chin Voon Loong said that in his 30 years experience of working with the company, there had never been a visit like this.

Accompanying Khalid were 12 other Shah Alam councillors from various other parties and NGOs.

"Maybe the previous MP and councillors were happy to leave the brewery there and collect quit rent," he said when contacted by Malaysiakini.

He was at the 38-year-old factory to 'survey' whether the site would be a good alternative for the proposed Shah Alam bus terminal.

Klang move not viable

He had apparently proposed to Chin to move the factory to a bigger lot in Klang, since it would be closer to the port and that all their malt have to be imported, as well as half of their products being produced for export.

NONE"Although there would be some savings in transportation cost, it doesn't seem to be commercially viable for them to move," said Khalid.

"And after listening to (Chin's) explanation, it is clear that the chances of them moving is very small. Even if they do move, it will cost too much and will have to be borne by the state government.

"So although the spot is the most strategic, we will have to think of another spot for the bus terminal, somewhere close to the highway and commuter train station," Khalid wrote on his blog.

'Poor town planning in the 1970s'

The brewery sits in the suburbs of the Malay-majority Shah Alam. When it was first opened in 1972, it was nestled in the middle of a leafy forest area right next to the Federal Highway.

However, being the first recognisable building from the highway upon entering the capital of Selangor from Kuala Lumpur, the brewery has become a landmark of sorts for Shah Alam.

And despite its low profile - except for a one-storey-high signboard of the company's logo visible from the highway - it has been the centre of attention for politicians from across the political divide, daring each other to move the factory away from Shah Alam.

NONE"There was an evident lack of town planning when the factory was allowed to be built there. At first it seemed like the right spot since it was surrounded by forests but who would've known that the brewery would become so prominent after Shah Alam became more and more developed," he said.

When contacted, he also said that the Muslim workers in the brewery also should not be shunned by other Muslims simply because of where they work.

"Granted, it is not the most ideal place to work, but we still have to accept them as our brothers," he said of the Muslim staff who make up a 'sizeable' amount of the 300-strong workforce.

The issue of alcohol has also been a bone of contention even among the Pakatan Rakyat politicians themselves.

Selangor PAS commissioner Hasan Ali was previously embroiled in an ugly spat with his fellow exco member from DAP, Ronnie Liu, when the latter had apparently 'advised' the Shah Alam local council that raiding a 7-Eleven outlet and seizing its alcoholic products was 'illegal'.

Things became ugly when Hasan suggested to the Menteri Besar to 'shift' Ronnie's portfolio of local government to someone else. They have mended fences since.

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