

**PAS abandons gambling, alcohol ban plans**  
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Conservative Islamic party PAS has shelved a proposal to ban gambling and restrict alcohol sales in the four states it rules with its political allies.  
MCPX

PAS is part of a three-member opposition alliance which made huge strides in March elections, wresting five states and a third of parliamentary seats from the ruling coalition.

Hardliners in the party have chafed at the moderate stance promoted by its alliance partners, including the multiracial PKR and the Chinese-based DAP.

pas muktamar 2008 hadiBut PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang said at the party's annual meeting that it would not pursue the campaign against gambling and alcohol demanded by influential party scholars, which would have affected much of Kuala Lumpur.

"Liquor is allowed by their religion ... so we allow them," Abdul Hadi was quoted as saying at the weekend talks by online news portal Siasah.

"We have to understand the (political) reality that we are part of an alliance and we do not have absolute power. So under such a government we focus on universal Islamic values like fighting corruption," he said.

Malaysia's population is dominated by Muslim Malays, living alongside large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities who are concerned over rising "Islamisation" of the country.

### **Banned in Kelantan**

In Kelantan, which PAS rules in its own right, it has banned gambling, restricted the sale of alcohol and requires men and women to queue in separate lines at shops.

Kelantan authorities periodically hit the headlines with attempts to ban women from wearing heavy make-up, skimpy clothes and high heels.

Mohamad Daud Iraqi, head of the PAS Islamic scholars group, has said the four other opposition-held states - Penang, Perak, Kedah and Selangor which surrounds the capital - should emulate Kelantan's Islamic laws.

"For starters, states under the opposition alliance can reduce the number of gambling premises as gambling is strictly prohibited by all religions," he was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times last week.

"Permits or licences to sell alcohol should either be limited or only allowed for areas inhabited by non-Muslims," he said.

PAS is trying to revamp its hardline image and capture support among ethnic Chinese and Indian communities after it was trounced in 2004 elections.

Its defeat then was seen as a vote against the party's fundamentalist approach, but its new

progressive stance paid dividends in the March elections when it enjoyed support even from urban Chinese and Indian voters.

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