

MB : no ban on alcohol in Selangor
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Selangor Mentri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said the state does not intend to impose a blanket ban on the sale of alcohol but is seeking to step up enforcement on existing restrictions.

The existing restrictions in the state are no sale of alcohol to Muslims as well as those under-18s.

According to Khalid, the move to tighten enforcement on alcohol sale will be implemented after consultation with retailers, local councils, related government agencies and NGOs early next year.

Khalid also clarified that the state cabinet, at its previous meetings, had not made any decision to ban alcohol.

"As a result of our meetings, the state government has decided to enhance enforcement on the sale of alcohol to Muslims and youth below 18 years old," he told reporters after chairing an exco meeting.

The issue of alcohol ban in the state blew up today following reports in the Chinese newspapers that PAS was pushing for new restrictions through local councils.

It was also reported that the Shah Alam City Council had debated and agreed to curb the sale of alcohol in the city from next January.

When asked about this today, Abdul Khalid said that the city council has been asked to put their decision on hold for now.

Anwar: No restrictions for now

Earlier today, while talking to reporters in Parliament, Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim reiterated that there was no new restrictions as yet on the sale of alcohol in Selangor.

He however said that the decision to impose restrictions on alcohol sale was entirely within the jurisdiction of the state government.

The Permatang Pauh MP said this matter should not be decided at the municipal level.

Such matters must be referred to the state government and it will be discussed at that level before any decision was made, he said.

"The basic principle is we do not want outlets to look like they are encouraging alcohol consumption especially among the young generation and Muslims, but there is no proposal from the state governments to ban it altogether in open premises which non-Muslims (frequent)," he said.

Anwar added that he has no problems with the current policies as the fundamentals were

clear.

"From the preliminary discussions - which we left to the menteri besar and the exco members - I don't foresee any problems," he said.

He however hinted that there might be "some adjustments" as to curb alcohol consumption by youngsters and "not to be seen encouraging Muslims to drink".

"There is no real change to the policy but we want to be sensitive," he added.

Allow room for proposals

However, he added that being a democratic state, there must be room for proposals and discussions.

"People give their opinions and feedback and we must listen to it but in the aspect of policy there is no problems yet," he said.

"(There is) nothing to be particularly worrying because the policy stand is that, we do not encourage Muslims to drink or even eat pork but we are not here to deny the rights of non-Muslims to eat pork or to consume alcoholic drinks," he said.

Chinese-language newspapers today front-paged that Selangor PAS had raised concerns on the present situation where certain alcoholic drinks are easily available at counters.

It is learnt that local councils would be tasked - pending council approvals - to impose a ban on alcohol sale in their respective areas.

Matter was discussed at exco meeting

Also in Parliament, Selangor senior executive councillor Teresa Kok said that the issue was discussed during an exco meeting several weeks ago following concerns raised on teenagers' alcohol consumption.

"But no decision was made and there is no such policy... but we were supposed to have a dialogue with 7-11 outlets, supermarkets and the dealers to discuss the matter," said Kok.

PAS deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa also told reporters that the decision on the ban was up to the state.

"We are trying to impose the restriction in the state which we are ruling, for instance in Kelantan, where no permission is given to new premises and there are no open alcohol sales.

"We are not stopping non-Muslims from consuming alcohol but it cannot be sold openly in Kelantan," said Nasharuddin, who is also the MP for Bachok.