

# No alcohol at govt functions, says Anwar

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**PETALING JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has reminded Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and his ministry (Motac) that alcohol must not be served at any official government function.

He said Motac's explanation that alcoholic beverages were served only after the official programme had ended was unacceptable, as the government maintains a clear policy prohibiting alcohol at official events.

"Motac stated that the drinks were served after the official programme concluded. However, it was still within the same venue and considered part of the event.

"We have given a firm warning to the minister and the ministry. This mistake must not be repeated. Regardless of the justification, it was completely inappropriate."

He was speaking to reporters at the Bunga Raya Complex after sending off visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Anwar also cautioned all Cabinet members and government agencies against treating the matter lightly.

"I want to remind every member of the Cabinet and the entire government machinery that negligence on this issue will not be tolerated."

Anwar's comments followed public outrage over alcohol being served during a dinner held in conjunction with the Global Travel Meet, which was attended by Tiong.

Photos from the event, which have since been widely circulated online, show the minister and several guests holding glasses of wine and beer.

On the issue, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming urged the public not to blow the matter out of proportion, adding that it could tarnish Malaysia's image ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026).

He said the dinner was a privately organised commercial event held in collaboration with the government to welcome international guests.

"The event's name itself, Global Travel Meet, clearly shows that it was an international commercial programme attended by participants from various backgrounds, including both Muslims and non-Muslims," Nga said after officiating at the National Observance of World Habitat Day 2025 in Cyberjaya yesterday.

"In events of such global nature, the serving of alcoholic beverages is commonly practised.

"However, we have never, and will never, ask our Muslim friends to be involved in such matters."

Nga said Malaysia is a nation that respects diversity, adding that Malaysia Truly Asia is more than a slogan as it reflects unity in diversity and interfaith harmony.

"We respect everyone, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and accord appropriate freedom to all our international guests."

He added that the Global Travel Meet secured investments and revenue worth about US\$420 million (RM2 billion), calling it a positive outcome for the country.

Nga urged all parties to focus on promoting Malaysia's image as a harmonious, open and respectful nation that welcomes visitors from around the world.

"If we continue to blow up issues such as this, it benefits no one. It would only harm the nation and our tourism sector."

The controversy erupted after Tiong came under fire for reports that alcoholic beverages were served at the dinner.

Critics accused the ministry of being insensitive to Muslim attendees, with some even calling for Tiong's resignation.

Tiong later clarified that Tourism Malaysia had only played a facilitating role in the event, which was organised by the private sector, and had used the occasion to promote the VM2026 calendar.