

Groups hail rise of drinking age

NATION

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PETALING JAYA: The move to raise the legal drinking age to 21 from 18 has been lauded by consumer groups, medical practitioners and parents.

The new ruling follows an amendment to the Food Regulation Act 1985, which was gazetted in May last year.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations secretary-general Datuk Paul Selvaraj said it was a good move as drinking brings a lot of risks.

“I think you need to be mature when you start to drink.

“The more mature you are, the better you can handle your alcohol,” he said.

He added that it was also important for the authorities to carry out enforcements on the new ruling.

“You must make sure all licensed alcohol operators adhere to this ruling,” he said.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Ravindran R. Naidu concurred that enforcement was needed for the new ruling.



Drinking among the young was a concern as most emergency departments see a significant number of alcohol-related problems on weekends, mostly involving youths, he said.

"Alcohol has significant adverse effects and raising the drinking age will help reduce them, but those who are already dependent on alcohol will need help to overcome their addiction," he said.

Dr Ravindran said making drinks more expensive was not enough, and education and support were needed to discourage people from excessive drinking.

Business owner and mother of one, Emily Sia, 38, said the new ruling is good as youngsters below 21 are still of studying age.

"If they start drinking at 18, they might frequent pubs and not be able to focus on their studies.

A company director, who only wanted to be known as John, 45, said it was important to instil the right knowledge about alcohol in children early on.

"They could still drink on the sly despite the age limit.

"We should teach our kids from an early age and advise them on the do's and don'ts of consuming alcohol.

"We cannot be there with them all the time. That's why we should teach our kids right from wrong," said the father of three.

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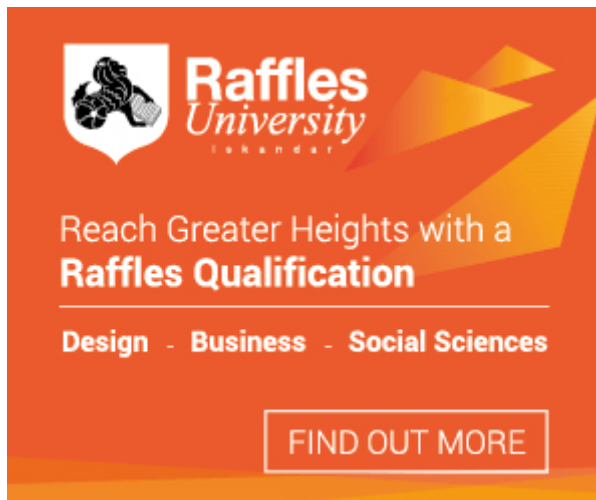
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