

Only 21 and above can buy alcohol

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MINIMUM AGE:

New ruling takes effect in December next year

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EFFECTIVE Dec 1 next year, only those aged 21 and above can buy alcoholic drinks, following the amendment made to the Food Regulations 1985.

Amended on May 27, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam announced the new age limit to be raised from 18 to 21 yesterday.

Other changes include business premises to display a notice stating "Alcohol consumption has adverse effects on health" and manufacturers to add a similar label on their drinks.

"The amendment is in line with the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol signed by all health ministers during the World Health Assembly in 2010 to reduce the availability of alcoholic beverages in the market.

"A lot of these cheap alcohol or compounded hard liquor (CHL), which are sold between RM5 and RM7, are creating social problems among the low-income group with many drinking irresponsibly in public. So, we want to address this issue.

"As such, we will raise the tax on CHL to RM40 per litre," he said yesterday.

He said a new standard had been introduced to control the availability of CHL or cheap liquor, which must now be sold in glass bottles with minimum 700ml content.

Dr Subramaniam said CHL was produced with a mixture of two or more alcoholic drinks, such as vodka, rum or brandy, and was sold legally at coffee, sundry, retail and medicine shops.

He said under the new ruling, all alcoholic drinks must be displayed separately from other drinks sold in shops.

He said the amendment was on Regulation 361 on the general standard for alcoholic drinks and the formulation of the new 386A Regulation for CHL.

He said the new ruling would also take effect on Dec 1 next year.

Dr Subramaniam said the increase in tax and age limit was aimed at stopping schoolchildren from buying and drinking alcohol.

At present, the excise duty on liquor is RM30 per litre.

He said the decision on the amendment was made after discussions with industry players, who had requested the time frame to implement the changes in December next year.

On addressing the social problem regarding alcohol, Dr Subramaniam said the ministry would work with the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry to address the problem with public drinking in parks and on the road.

He said more regulations and amendments would be made from time to time.



Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam