



جمعية العلماء ومدرسي الدين الإسلامي بسنغافورة

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### **Pergas' Response to Ministry of Home Affairs' Proposed Measures on Liquor Sale and Consumption at Public Places**

The Singapore Islamic Scholars & Religious Teachers Association (Pergas) lauds and welcomes the government's proposals to ban alcohol in some public areas.

2 Pergas understands that alcohol is a source of revenue for many businesses and has been associated with time out from the pressure of everyday work and life.

3 Pergas also notes that drinking has become a part of social bonding and may facilitate friendship formation for some traditions. However problems or harms related to alcohol and anti-social behavior implicated by consuming alcoholic beverages in public areas should not be neglected. This is especially important if it affects the national's security and its economy growth.

#### **Problems Related to Consuming Alcohol**

4 Drinking prompted socially unacceptable behavior such as rowdiness, increasing aggression, quarrels, vomiting in public areas and insults. Some crimes such as reckless driving have also been associated with drinking. The recent riot in Little India was a strong evidence of nuisances towards public safety and security associated to consumption of alcohol. As was also mentioned by Minister S Iswaran and Minister Lui Tuck Yew, it is plausible that alcohol consumption was contributory

factor to the recent riot in Little India. Consequently, the government took action to temporarily curb sale and consumption of alcohol at Little India which indicated the harm of alcohol.

5 Excessive alcohol consumption is also closely associated by medical practitioners with an increased risk of hypertension, stroke, hepatitis, heart diseases, cancer and addictions. According to World Health Organization, Singapore is considered high as compared to US in terms of its size of population to alcohol prevalence and dependence rate. Alcohol consumption especially binge drinking has increased among Singaporeans between 1992 and 2004.

6 On another report on Population-based of Mental Disorder (2012) study conducted by a group of psychiatrist professionals in Singapore, shows 12% had at least one lifetime affective, anxiety, or alcohol use disorders. While the lifetime prevalence of MDD was 5.8% and that of bipolar disorder was 1.2%.

7 The negative social and health implications are huge for Singapore to be spending its resources heavily on remediation and rehabilitation implicated by alcohol prevalent and abused. This is another reason why alcohol restriction should be given more attention in Singapore.

8 As such, following are Pergas' feedback on the proposed recommendations by the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the designation of no-alcohol zones at some public places and shortening the sale hours of liquor at retail outlets.

**Recommendation 1: Designation no-alcohol zones at some public places**

No.	MHA Proposal	Feedback by Pergas
1a	<b>Designate certain common areas within <u>all</u> neighbourhoods in Singapore as permanent no-alcohol zones</b>	Pergas is in support of the government's proposal of (1a) and (1b).  Public security and safety should be the ultimate concern and not commercial factors alone. The matter needs more attention as it

1b **Designate problematic areas where groups are found frequently congregating and drinking as temporary no-alcohol zones.**

was reported by The Straits Times dated 10 December 2012 reported that those residing at Little India area are afraid to go out after 2.00pm on Sundays as the area started to get crowded by foreign workers.

On top of that, Pergas would also like to suggest designating vicinity around congregation areas and those which needs to be respected such as places of worship including mosques, churches, temples and synagogues as permanent no-alcohol zones. Though some of these places are not in residential areas such as Sultan Mosque, areas and alleys around Sultan Mosque for instance, should be safe and comfortable as public and family gather to pray and listen to lectures.

The security and safety of these places especially areas around Sultan Mosque should continue to be respected as it is a national monument and visited by many tourists. The security of this area and no-alcohol zones will also attract and better cater for more tourists, particularly those from Middle East who mostly are Muslims. This will indirectly help the business of the areas and hence contribute to the country's development.

## Recommendation 2: Shortening the sale hours of alcohol at retail outlets

No.	MHA Proposal	Feedback by Pergas
2a	<b>Shorten sale hours of alcohol at <u>all</u> retail outlets in Singapore</b>	Pergas agree to the proposal and suggests that all retail outlets within residential areas should not be permitted to sell alcohol after 7 pm till 7 am.
2b	<b>Shorten sale hours of alcohol at retail outlets within <u>problematic areas</u>.</b>	Pergas agree to the proposal and suggests that retail outlets within problematic areas should not be permitted to sell alcohol after 9 pm till 7 am. The Government could also impose a certain quantity that can be bought from the retail outlets within problematic areas. This is to curb irresponsible drinking.

### Further suggestions

9 Pergas would also like to suggest for better education and campaign on the harm of consuming alcohol. Studies have shown that most drinkers consume alcohol on the perception of the benefits of alcohol such as time-out, becoming more happy, pleasure and other positive expectations from drinking. In fact, a study showed that with age, drinkers are less convinced of the risks. (Schulenberg and Maggs 2002; Smith et al. 1995).

10 Imposing higher tax and increasing the licensing fee for selling alcohol products should also be implemented. Increasing the price of alcohol sold in residential areas could also be considered. This is to reduce the sales of cheap alcohols.

11 Apart from that, the government could also consider raising the legal age for alcohol to 21 years old.

12 As part of a social concern society, Pergas hopes that Singapore will remain as a safe and prosperous country. May the movement towards healthy and goodness be exhibited in the changing plural society of Singapore.

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(PERGAS)**