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A safe space to light up

Designated smoking zones to be allowed outside public areas

PUTRAJAYA: Smokers who felt edged out by the government's smoking ban are being given their own space to light up.

Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin announced that designated smoking areas can now be built outside eateries and in public areas.

She said eateries and restaurant operators could provide designated smoking areas that were at least 3m from their nearest table.

Restaurant operators, she said, could apply to set up these zones via their local councils at their own expense.

However, if the smoking zone is to be built on the restaurant operator's own land and involves a temporary structure, operators do not need approval from the local council.

"This is to satisfy the smokers and show that the government is concerned with their plight. We provide the facility, so that they are more willing to comply with the no-smoking policy," Zuraida said at her ministry's headquarters near here yesterday.

There are no specific designs for the designated smoking zones but the ministry suggested the zones to have a roof or a canopy.

Among the guidelines are that the premises owners provide proper places to dispose cigarette butts and maintain the cleanliness of the place.

A clear signage must also be installed to mark the place as a designated smoking area.

If the smoking area involves the construction of a permanent structure on land not owned by the restaurant operator, then approval from the local council must be sought.

The guidelines on designated



Special zone: People smoking at a designated smoking area at Taman Dato Ahmad Razali in Ampang.

smoking areas will soon be provided to the local councils, who will then engage with the restaurant operators.

"If the restaurant owners are concerned about their business because of the no-smoking rule, therefore they should invest a little bit (in the smoking zone).

"We are facilitating for the 20% of Malaysians who are smokers," she said.

While the Health Ministry is responsible for the enforcement of the smoking ban at eateries by receiving complaints and issuing summonses, the gazetting of the smoking areas fell under the purview of the Housing and Local Government Ministry as it involved land matters.

Watch the video
thestartv.com



Zuraida said RM1mil had been allocated by her ministry to 155 local councils nationwide to set up designated smoking areas in public areas such as food courts and parks.

For example, Senario Ampang and Laman Santai Ampang Point communal areas launched by Zuraida in December last year incorporated smoking areas, which followed the guidelines of being 3m away from the nearest eatery.

The local councils are encouraged to submit their applications to build their smoking zones in public areas to the ministry.

On a separate matter, Zuraida said the nationwide tour on the Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030 will begin in the first week of February in Selangor.

The roadshow, which will be undertaken by Zuraida who is PKR vice-president and party deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, is meant to promote the policies of SPV 2030 to party grassroots.

Zuraida added that the government is on track to achieving its target of building affordable homes, with nearly 200,000 units having been built, or in construction, in the last one year-and-a-half.

She said this was in line with the government's pledge to build 100,000 affordable housing units a year over a 10-year period.

Smokers in Melaka can still puff at designated smoking areas

MELAKA: Smokers here still have the liberty to puff at existing designated areas, says the state government.

Melaka health and anti-drug committee chairman Low Chee Leong, however, said there were no plans to create new smoking bays.

"We have no intention to neglect the need of smokers and they can still enjoy a smoke at the multiple designated areas here," he said after a preview of Chinese New Year preparations by the business community in Jalan Bunga Raya yesterday.

Low said that although the state government would not hinder the "democratic right" of smokers, it would encourage them to kick the habit to help create a smoke-free environment.

He said Melaka was also committed to further strengthening efforts to reduce the exposure to cigarette smoke.

Melaka was the first state to gazette five areas, including two districts, as "no-smoking" zones in 2011. The areas are World Heritage City, Taman Melaka Raya, the Melaka International Trade Centre (MITC) in Ayer Keroh and the Alor Gajah and Jasin town centres.

"We still set aside a place for smokers despite having five areas totalling about 338ha free from cigarette smoke almost nine years ago," he added.



Owners, smokers back smoking zones:
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