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Govt does not intend to revoke liquor licence policy for eateries -- Tengku Zafrul

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 9 – The federal government does not intend to withdraw any approval granted for liquor licence for the sale of alcoholic beverages, Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said.

Instead the minister denied a claim that he had revoked the liquor licence measure for restaurants and coffee shops to sell alcoholic beverages.

He said the existing policy stipulated that the retail sale of alcoholic beverages on premises must be licensed under the Excise Act 1976 and any licensing for the sale of alcoholic beverages must obtain the approval of the Licensing Board in accordance with Section 35 of the Excise Act 1976.

The minister said the licensing of the sale of alcoholic beverages was under the jurisdiction of the Licensing Board which was appointed by the delegation of authority from the Minister of Finance (MoF) to the Menteri Besar or Chief Ministers through an order gazetted in 1977.

"Hence, a claim the Minister of Finance had revoked the delegation of power is untrue. This confusion has arisen in

the implementation and enforcement (of the jurisdiction) at the state level.

"I have instructed the Royal Malaysian Customs Department to take immediate action to ensure that this confusion does not recur and the licensing of the sale of alcoholic beverages remains under the jurisdiction of the Licensing Board.

"I would like to assure you once again that the delegation of authority through the order gazetted in 1977 remains. I have also instructed the Customs Department to take immediate action to ensure this confusion does not recur and liquor licensing remains under jurisdiction of the Licensing Board," he said during the Minister's Question Time at the Dewan Rakyat, here today.

Tengku Zafrul was responding to a supplementary question from Tony Pua Kiam Wee (PH-Damansara) who wanted to know the reason why the MoF did not directly revoke the sale of alcoholic beverages so that no authority needed to be delegated to the state governments.

On Tuesday, MCA President and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Wee Ka Siong claimed that the Customs Department had been instructed to repeal the new liquor licensing policy for restaurants and coffee shops in a post on his Facebook.

A day earlier, the media reported that restaurants and coffee shops selling alcoholic beverages would have to apply for a new licence starting Jan 1.

Asserting on the matter, Tengku Zafrul said: "Appropriate action will be taken to resolve this matter by Dec 31, 2021. Thus, any issue regarding licensing or exemption from licensing is subject to the full power of the state governments."

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