



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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**Letter to the Editor**

**5 May 2017**

## **PROLIFERATION OF LIQUOR SHOPS IN PENANG'S LITTLE INDIA**

The Consumers' Association of Penang is shocked to find that there is a proliferation of liquor shops in the Little India area here in Penang. We strongly believe that liquor shops should not be allowed to set up in places with homes and offices.

We have received complaints about liquor shops opening up tables along the roadside to seat the people who patronize their shops. The tables that are opened up far exceed the parameters of their shops premises and encroach on the space of their neighbours (other businesses that have closed for the day).

Residents, owners of businesses and office workers in the Little India area have expressed their growing unease with the open air, happy hour party atmosphere that takes place once working hours are over. The display of unruly behaviour by patrons of these liquor shops make the area unsafe for those who live and work there.

Not just in the Little India area but even along the Chulia Street stretch we see many "bistro" type shops advertising discounts on beer and selling other hard liquor. The idea is that these shops set up with the intention of catering to the foreigners that come here for vacation and, more particularly, the foreign workers. However, we would like to remind the authorities that the physical and mental well-being of our local people is more important and should be given priority.

We should also note that these liquor shops are placed in close proximity to the Street of Harmony which consists of the St. George's Church, Kuan Yin Temple, Sri Mahamariamman Temple and the Kapitan Keling Mosque. These are all places of worship and people in the surrounding area should be behaving respectfully and decently, not drunken and unruly.

The license to operate a liquor shop is something that is issued by the Customs Department. Do they not check where the shop will be set up before issuing the license to sell liquor?

In some western countries, where drinking alcohol is the norm of their culture, people are not allowed to have an open container (can, bottle or glass) of alcoholic beverage in an open space or vehicle. But it seems that in Malaysia anything goes. Hence, our local liquor shops are able to operate and open up tables along sidewalks unhindered.

On that note, even though our local council does not issue licenses for liquor shops, shouldn't they do something about those tables obstructing the sidewalks and five-foot-ways that come before that?

All things considered, CAP asks that the liquor shops operating in the Little India area be shut down at once for the well-being of the residents and workers in the area. We do not want an incident like the “2013 Little India riot” in Singapore, where many of the rioters were intoxicated by alcohol, to happen in our Little India.

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