

Dr Lee: Sarawak not exempted from full enforcement of smoking, vaping ban in all food premises

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Dr Lee Boon Chye – Bernama file photo

KUCHING: Sarawak is not exempted from the full enforcement of the smoking and vaping ban in all food premises from Jan 1, next year, said Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye.

According to him, it is mandatory for Sarawak to implement the full enforcement starting next year.

Asked whether Sarawak had the autonomy to decide not to implement the policy, Dr Lee said: “No.” Several attempts to contact Local Government and Housing Minister Dato Sri Dr Sim Kui Hian for comments on the subject matter had been unsuccessful.

Assistant Minister of Local Government and Housing Datu Dr Penguang Manggil, who responded, however, advised The Borneo Post to contact his minister.

When asked if the State Cabinet had discussed the matter, Penguang replied: “Not recently.”

Asked whether the Sarawak government had the autonomous right on the matter, he said: “Sarawak will assist to educate the public while enforcement will be done by the Health Department.”

On Dec 20, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced that smoking and vaping would be strictly prohibited in all food premises across Malaysia from next year.

Dr Lee said offenders would be slapped with a fine of RM250, but the fine would be reduced to RM150 if settled in less than a month.

He added that offenders who refused to pay up may face a fine of up to RM10,000.

The smoking ban was enforced on Jan 1 this year in Peninsular Malaysia while such enforcement in Sabah and Sarawak began from Feb 1 and Mar 1, respectively.

The MoH later announced a six-month education enforcement for the general public to follow the rule before summonses were issued from July 1.

Despite So, the MoH, in April this year, announced that the grace period be extended for another six months until end of this year.

Under the law, smokers can only smoke 10 feet or three metres away from any food premises. Those caught smoking in prohibited areas can be fined up to RM10,000 or jailed for two years. The smoking ban is Malaysia’s commitment as a member state to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.