

South Korea moves to restrict alcohol advertising

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA: South Korea has drafted a new law aimed at restricting alcohol advertising amid mounting concerns over binge drinking and alcohol-related crimes, a government official said on Thursday.



The draft legislation prohibits TV programmes targeting teenagers from carrying any alcohol commercials, the Ministry of Health and Welfare said.

It also seeks to ban alcohol advertising on public transport systems including buses, subways, taxi cabs, trains, flights and ferries.

"This is a landmark law in this country aimed at changing public consciousness about alcoholism and attitudes toward binge-drinking," the ministry's Deputy Director Park Chang-Kyu told AFP.

"There have been mounting outcries over alcohol-related crimes these days. There is also a widespread national consensus on the need to change the nation's indulgent attitude toward alcoholism," he said.

The new law could be adopted by parliament by the end of this year, he said.

It also imposes heavy fines of up to five million won (\$4,420) for selling alcohol at schools, and authorises local governments to ban alcohol from public parks and beaches.

Many Koreans tend to turn a blind eye to alcohol abuse, with binge-drinking widely accepted as a relatively harmless habit in a stressful society which has one of the world's highest suicide rates.

South Koreans are the world's heaviest consumers of spirits, guzzling 9.57 litres per head in 2005, according to a World Health Organization report published last year.

President Lee Myung-Bak last month called for tough action against alcohol-induced violence, lamenting "a culture of

tolerating misbehaviour by drunk people".

He said South Korea might be the only country in the world where drunks beat up police and get away with it.

Street brawls, family violence and other crimes involving drinking are common but police and courts often hand down lenient punishments to offenders.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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