

# WELFARE LOTTERY TO STOP

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**PETALING JAYA, Wed.**  
— The Social Welfare Services Lottery, which was started 39 years ago, will stop in six months.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Social and Welfare Services Lotteries Board would cease operations but "we will not disturb other lottery schemes ... they do not involve the government."

The finance ministry said in a statement earlier that the decision to discontinue the only gaming activity the government was involved in was in line with the policy of inculcating Islamic values.

Dr Mahathir said the decision was made at this morning's Cabinet meeting and the six months were needed to look into the welfare of the workers.

The future of those involved in selling the lottery tickets would also have to be looked into, he told reporters after breaking fast

at the defence ministry's mosque here.

"The six months are needed to arrange for these things, such as transfer and all that ... You can't just close like that because there are many working people involved ... we'll do what we can," he said.

On the loss of revenue for the government following the decision, Dr Mahathir said: "We hope we will replace it with other sources."

On whether the decision was a sign that the general election was around the corner, he quipped: "All these things are signs."

On why the decision was made at this time, he said: "Whenever we make a decision, the question will still arise. Even if we had made the decision 10 years ago, people would have asked why not earlier. There must be a time when we have to decide ... we decide now."

The finance ministry statement, in full, reads: "Of late, certain quarters have hurled a lot of criticisms at the government in connection with gambling.

"At present, the Social Welfare

Services Lottery is the only gaming activity in which the government has direct interest.

"In line with the policy of inculcating Islamic values and to reduce gambling, the government has decided it will no longer be directly involved in running a lottery.

"With this decision, the lottery which has been sponsored by the Social Welfare Services Board since 1951 will be stopped.

"The government has made the decision although it is aware that it will involve a loss in revenue."

From 1985 to June 1988, the lottery board was reported to have registered a nett profit of \$117.59 million.

The board, which holds a draw every three weeks, has 200 agents and 6,000 sub-agents to sell the tickets nationwide.

It has about 100 staff including 40 employed on contract basis.

The welfare services ministry receives monthly allocations while the proceeds from the sale of the six million \$2 tickets are banked into consolidated funds.

A drop in the sale of tickets was reported in recent years with

competition from private sector lotteries like the Big Sweep and the Sabah Sweepstakes.

This prompted the ministry to send a delegation to West Germany early last year to pick up new ideas to make the lottery more popular.

On Aug 1 last year, the first prize was increased from \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

Under the new structure, every ticket gives the buyer three chances of winning prizes — one from the main draw and the other two from the scratch-and-win portion (with cash of between \$4 and \$10,000 and promotional items like cars and household appliances to be won).

Not all the winners have claimed their prizes. Since the first draw in 1951, \$55 million has not been claimed.

According to the board, about \$2 million or \$3 million a year or an average of \$100,000 a draw are not claimed by the winners.

The main reason for this is believed to be failure by buyers to check tickets against the winning numbers.