

PM: Board given six months to wind up

Welfare Lottery

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to cease

By Sabry Sharif

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Social and Welfare Services Lotteries Board has been told to wind up its activities by September, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said it would take six months to phase out the operations of the Board as the Government had to look into alternative employment for the staff and agents.

"We will not absorb them into other Government agencies. But we have to think of something for these people," he told newsmen after breaking fast with Armed Forces personnel at the Ministry of Defence mosque in Jalan Padang Tembak.

Dr Mahathir said the decision to stop the Government's involvement in the lottery business was made at the Cabinet meeting this morning.

He was commenting on the announcement by the Finance Ministry that the Social Welfare Lottery tickets which had been on sale since 1950 would be stopped.

The Ministry's statement did not give the effective date of this ruling.

It said the Government's decision was in line with its aspirations to

control and reduce gambling activities and concurrent with the assimilation of Islamic values in the country.

Dr Mahathir said the Government did not plan to allow the lottery to be taken over by the private sector.

"As far as the Government is concerned, the Social Welfare Lottery will not exist at all after six months from now."

He said lotteries operated by private companies would not be affected by this move.

Asked why the decision was only made now when several groups had criticised sometime ago the Government's involvement in the lottery, Dr Mahathir said:

"When (the time) we decide is immaterial because there will always be some quarters who will ask why we didn't do this before.

"What is important is that there must be a time where we have to make a decision. And we have decided that it should be now."

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the loss of revenue from the lottery would not have any impact on the Government's coffers.

"Before, the lottery helped to supplement our revenue. But now with the increased Government revenue from the various sources, we do not need the income from the lottery."

The Board conducts several draws

Over \$6m in prizes for each draw

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for its lottery tickets annually, offering prize monies exceeding \$6 million for each draw. Each ticket costs \$2.

The lottery is now the only gaming activity in the country in which the Government has a direct stake.

The next scheduled draw for the Social Welfare Lottery tickets is April 10 at the Taiping Town Hall.

The board has about 200 agents and 6,000 sub-agents.

It has about 100 employees, including 40 on contract.

From 1985 to June 1988, the board registered a nett

profit of \$117.59 million from sales.

The lottery now offers prize monies totalling \$6,459,840 and bonus prizes like cars, motorcycles, electrical appliances and cash.

The first prize in each draw is \$2 million, second \$300,000, third \$100,000, fourth \$70,000 and fifth \$50,000.

Although the Social Welfare lottery offers prize monies amounting to millions of ringgit, not all the winners claim them. Since the first draw in 1951, a total of \$55 million had been left unclaimed.

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