

26 SEP 2001

Chong-Gambling

TRADING LICENCE TO BE ISSUED TO DIRIWAN CORP

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 26 (Bernama) -- The state government has agreed to issue a trading licence to Dirivan Corporation Sdn Bhd to resume its number forecast operations in Sabah, Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said today.

He said the decision was taken to respect what was earlier decided by the federal Finance Ministry which approved the renewal of Dirivan Corp's gaming licence effective Oct 1.

Dirivan Corp, a unit of Olympia Industries Bhd, ceased its number forecast operations in 1996 when it was found to have breached the licensing conditions.

"With this decision, the state government expects Dirivan to update its monthly rental of RM250,000 for the use of the Tambalang race course in Tuaran to the government," Chong told reporters after chairing the weekly cabinet meeting here.

The company was also expected to develop the Tambalang race course into a proper international race course as well as for equine activities to draw visitors to the state, he said.

Yesterday, former chief minister and Sabah People's Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said it was the policy of the state Barisan Nasional government since 1994 to reduce gambling in Sabah.

However, Chong said while gambling could never be eliminated, the activity could be controlled through licensing.

"You want to eliminate gambling, then you will be giving all the opportunity to the underground (the illegal gambler)," he said.

Chong also said it was not within the powers of the chief minister as well as the state to prohibit anyone from wanting to operate gaming businesses.

On the RM4.3 billion stimulus package announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Chong said he hoped Sabah would be given top priority in the package.

-- BERNAMA

HAK RM