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Greater clout for police to wipe out illegal gaming

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Police have been granted additional powers following amendments made to the Common Gaming Houses Act 1953 in their efforts to wipe out the illegal gaming menace.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said under the amendments, police were empowered to close any premises or part of it that was believed to be used for gaming activities.

However, he said only the district police chief has the authority to issue the order for the premises or part of it to be closed under Section 15A of the Common Gaming Houses (Amendment) Act 2001.

Norian said the amended Act would not reduce the authority of local municipal councils.

The amended Act had been approved by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his capacity as Finance Minister.

"It is effective beginning Dec 1, 2001 and is applicable nationwide except for Sarawak which has its own gaming laws under the State legislation," he said today.

Asked how a premises could be identified as being believed to be running gaming activities, Norian said: "A raid would be conducted after which the premises will be shut down."

Police are also empowered to forfeit gaming machines if they are unclaimed by the owner after 14 days.

The forfeiture will only be implemented if no charges are filed in the court or written claim is made to the district police chief.

Norian said that police were also given the power to apply for the disconnection of energy supply to such premises and that Tenaga Nasional Berhad would have to disconnect the supply immediately.

"Such an action can be carried out by an officer with the rank of Assistant Superintendent and above. The disconnection of electricity supply can only be effective for a period not exceeding one month," he said.

The disconnection of power supply comes under Section 21A of the amended Act.

Norian also said that anyone found to be operating or assisting in illegal gaming activities can be charged under Section 4(1) of the Act.

Those found guilty are liable to a fine of between RM5,000 and RM50,000 or a jail term of not more than three years for each machine seized.

Those involved with illegal gaming machines such as importing, making, collecting, distributing, selling, renting, lending, giving services or repairing can be charged under Section 4B of the Act.

Those found guilty are liable to a fine of between RM10,000 and RM100,000 for each machine seized and a jail term of not more than five years.

Norian said the Act was also amended to extend its definition to include any mechanical, electrical or electronic machines or any other device including any computer programmes or device.

He said the advancement in information technology had made gaming activities very sophisticated.

He added the mushrooming of illegal gaming outlets had made the existing law outdated and inadequate.

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