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Snooker--Sarawak

CABINET DECIDES TO STOP ISSUING/RENEWING SNOOKER CENTRE LICENCES

SIBU, Oct. 28 (Bernama) -- The State Cabinet has decided to direct all local councils to stop issuing or renewing operating licences for snooker centres by 2004.

In disclosing this here today, the Minister of Environment and Public Health, Datuk William Mawan, said the decision was made because some of these outlets had abused the terms and conditions of the licence.

Mawan, whose Ministry is in charge of local councils, said this after launching the State-level Malaysia Environmental Week celebrations.

He said some of these centres had now been associated with some forms of negative social aspects where people were betting and gaming.

The directive, sent out last week, has caught many snooker centre operators by surprise.

They feel that it will spell the end of snooker in the State.

However, Mawan said the decision was not "a death warrant" for snooker but one made with noble intentions.

"We feel we need to review the whole issue. If we allow the operators a free hand in everything, there is a possibility that things can get out of hand...if it has not already got out of hand."

He said although the Cabinet had made a decision, it would consider appeals.

"The onus is now on the operators to approach us and present their views, so that we can go to the Cabinet again."

"There is one year more before the final curtain falls and this certainly gives all the parties concerned a lot of time to take a relook at the issue."

On Prime Minister Datuk Sri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent comments on inefficient councils and corrupt officials, Mawan said as far as the State Government was concerned all local councils were efficiently managed despite facing a lot of constraints.

However, he declined comment on whether any officials had been found to be involved in corrupt practices.

"I leave this to the relevant authorities to deal with," he said.

He added that all councils were always striving to give their best in serving the public whose expectations and demands, however, were limitless.

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