

Dr M: Gambling, pork are their right
Malaysiakini.com
June 23, 2010
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The government should not have any doubts and go ahead with the issuing of the sports betting license to the Berjaya Group, former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad said today.

"If I were the government, I would approve it," he told the media after hosting an education-related event at his Perdana Leadership Foundation office in Putrajaya.

He said the government should not get in the way of those who have no prohibitions against gambling.

mahathir ikmal presidential lecture 290410"The Chinese always gamble. To them it is not haram (prohibited by religion). Why should we prohibit them? We can't stop them from eating pork because for them it is not haram," he said.

This is the second time the former premier (right) has openly supported the issuance of the sports betting license to the Berjaya Group; the first was at the Melayu Bangkit rally in Terengganu last week when he said the license would help regulate the gaming industry.

Mahathir had been the first to issue the sports betting license to Vincent Tan's Berjaya Group in 1987 but Tan had returned it in 1990 saying it was not lucrative.

Thirteen years later in 2003, Mahathir's administration reissued the license to Berjaya but again the move was short-lived when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who took over the premiership in 2004, did not allow Berjaya to run sports betting operations.

The decision to revive the license by current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has sparked a public uproar with protests coming from both opposition and pro-government groups who are against the move.

This had led to the government announcing a freeze on the issuance of the license, pending further public feedback.

Anti-gaming memo for Najib

Meanwhile, the Anti-Gambling Movement (GMJ) today presented a memorandum of protest against the introduction sports betting to Najib at his office in Putrajaya.

GMJ chairperson Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid said the memorandum reflects a united front against sports betting as the NGOs involved represented all the various races and religions.

azlan"The representatives from the Chinese and Indian communities also say they are against sports betting and all races see gambling as ruinous, bringing negative effects upon society," he said, adding that gambling was prohibited even by non-Muslims.

Accompanying Mohd Azmi were Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall vice-president Ser Choon Ing, Chinese NGO LLG Cultural Development Centre representative Goh King Seng and Lee Ban Chen from Budayawan Bertindak.

GMJ secretary Suhaizan Kaiat said their next move would be to apply for a permit from the Kuala Lumpur police headquarters tomorrow at 10am for their July 3 public protest against sports betting.

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