

MCA proposes separate fund for gambling revenue
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The MCA has suggested that the government set up a separate fund to collect revenues and proceeds from licensed gambling companies.

Its president Dr Chua Soi Lek said the fund could be used to finance projects for the benefit of all communities such as education and welfare.

"The time has come for the government to provide a separate fund for taxes collected from gambling licences and not make them part of the consolidated fund," he told reporters after opening the 31st annual general meeting of Koperasi Serbaguna Malaysia Berhad (KSM) at Wisma MCA today.

NONEChua was asked to comment on the government's decision last night not to issue sports betting licence to Ascott Sports Sdn Bhd.

He said the government should also enhance enforcement on illegal gambling, particularly sports betting.

Chua also refuted the notion that gambling was entrenched in the Chinese culture.

"We respect the government's decision but feel that it won't resolve illegal gambling. We understand the sensitivity, especially among Muslims; and it is not true to say that the Chinese like to gamble," he said.

NONEIn Kota Bharu, Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (right) who is also the Umno vice-president said Prime Minister Najib Razak had taken into consideration all views before making the decision.

"It was made without touching the sensitivities of other religions," he told reporters after opening the Pengkalan Chepa Umno division meeting.

International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed said Kelantan Umno was relieved by the decision.

"We hope that the opposition pact in Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Kelantan will take similar steps and no longer renew licence for gambling premises," he said.

Decision shows government willing to listen

In Putrajaya, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Ahmad Maslan said the decision was proof of the government's willingness to listen to the views of the people.

Ahmad, who is Umno information chief, said the government made the decision not because of the call from the opposition but due to strong reactions from the grassroots.

"During the (Umno supreme council) meeting last night, we discussed resolutions from Umno divisions nationwide which are against the issuance of sports betting licence," he told reporters after opening the Rowing Competition and the Prime Minister's Department Family Day.

Meanwhile, Abdul Ghani Minhat, dubbed the country's Football King during his heyday in the 60s, hailed the decision and said that it should be supported by all.

"Allowing football betting is tantamount to killing the game. We have seen how gambling destroyed our football in 1994 and 1995 when players were involved in match-fixing," he told Bernama when contacted.

Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) secretary-general Azzuddin Ahmad said the FAM respected the decision.

"As the football governing body in the country, we support the government's move," he said.

In Nilai, Umno supreme council member Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi described the decision as appropriate and timely.

"I hope no one will take advantage and politicise the matter," he said.

In Ipoh, Perak BN Menteri Besar Zambry Abdul Kadir described the decision as a bold and wise move.

The prime minister, he said, had demonstrated leadership qualities in making the decision after weighing all views and not acting in haste.

"Football betting cannot be seen from the economic perspective alone because we should also consider its social and political effect as well as the sentiment among the people," he said.

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