

**Blanket ban on gambling undesirable, says group**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**July 03, 2010**

A group of cultural NGOs has hailed the success of the Anti-Gambling Movement (GMJ) in pressuring the government to retract the controversial sports betting licence but stressed that the curse of gambling cannot be eradicated by a blanket ban.

The Cultural Development Centre (LLG), Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH) and the Tamil Foundation said in a joint statement yesterday that a blanket ban would do more harm than good.

The statement was signed by former Penang state cabinet member and LLG president Dr Toh Kin Woon, KLSCAH president Tan Yew Sing and Tamil Foundation advisor Arumugam Kalimuthu.

While agreeing that gambling is a harbinger of moral decay and family problems, the group believes however that a blanket ban would run contrary to the principles and values of democracy.

"It is feared a blanket ban on gambling could easily be labelled as support for an Islamic state, altogether diverting the focus of the reform agenda," the group said.

"Indirectly, it will also overtake more pressing issues such as corruption, cronyism, social injustice and oppression against supporters of democracy and the down-trodden."

Education and awareness campaign

The group argued that the rest of the battle lies in convincing society to stop betting.

"We are of the opinion that the anti-football betting movement has achieved its original objective.

"If there are those who intend to continue this movement, it must be done through education and campaigns to raise awareness, not by abolishing all forms of gambling," said the group.

"Long-term education programmes must be created to instil values of humanism and a healthy and moderate lifestyle culture to combat materialism and the culture of lust."

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/136304>