

Imposition of levy on casino gamblers needs careful study: Muhyiddin
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BOGOR - Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said a thorough study is needed to look at the impact arising from Malaysians gambling in Singapore casinos before any measure, including the imposition of a levy as suggested by some parties, is introduced, Bernama reported.

Personally, he said, he would not encourage anyone to gamble in Malaysia or Singapore, but currently, the government did not impose any restriction on anyone going to Singapore to gamble, but in Malaysia, there was a restriction on Muslims gambling in casinos in Genting Highland.

"I don't want to say anything (on the proposal to impose a levy). We have to study this because we don't want Singapore to say later that we are obstructing, preventing. We are part of Asean and Asean adopts a policy of free trade, open. Even the movement of people, we cannot stop and prevent.

"If they choose to gamble, what business does the government have in preventing and so on. Is the imposition of the levy a reasonable move? This we have to study deeply, or there are other initiatives that we can implement to be looked at not only from the economic aspect, but from the social, community leadership, political parties may have a role to play in this matter," he said.

He was asked to comment on the proposal by BN Youth and the Johor MCA Youth that the federal government imposes a levy on Malaysians going to gamble in Singapore casinos to prevent the outflow of funds from this country to the republic besides overcoming social problems arising from such activities.

There are reports stating that various facilities such as free transportation, food and pocket money had been offered by the parties concerned to attract Malaysians to spend time and money in the republic.

Muhyiddin, who was concluding his four-day visit to Jakarta on Saturday, said developments arising from this new phenomenon must be studied, whether they were temporary in nature or after suffering losses, the people concerned might no longer want to go there to gamble.

"From the social aspect, the implication is bad. This is because it involves a neighbouring country. We can't make hasty decisions, we have to study the short-term and long-term impacts, and what is the best approach to tackle social problems such as these," he said.

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