

Home Team Connects

Connecting You with the Home Team

An initiative by the Home Team Volunteer Network



ESTABLISHMENT OF GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY AND REVIEW OF GAMBLING LAWS

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will expand the mandate of the Casino Regulatory Authority (CRA), by reconstituting the Statutory Board to establish the Gambling Regulatory Authority (GRA) by 2021. GRA will be a Statutory Board, with the mandate to regulate the entire gambling landscape in Singapore.

2. To ensure that our laws and regulatory approach towards gambling keep pace with the evolving gambling landscape and remain effective, MHA will be reviewing and amending gambling-related legislation by 2021.

Background

3. Gambling regulation in Singapore is currently overseen by various Government agencies. CRA regulates the casinos, while the Gambling Regulatory Unit in MHA regulates remote gambling services and fruit machines. The Singapore Totalisator Board governs terrestrial gambling services operated by the Singapore Pools. The Singapore Police Force (SPF) takes enforcement action against illegal gambling activities. In addition, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is responsible for social safeguards to address the harms of gambling, and also regulates the advertising and promotion of gambling, as well as the Responsible Gambling Programmes of regulated entities.

4. Overall, our gambling regulatory framework has delivered good outcomes. Gambling-related crimes remains low in number, and problem gambling is under control. Casino crimes contributed to fewer than one per cent of overall crime, and the number of people arrested for illegal gambling has decreased by 28 per cent from 2011 to 2019. Probable pathological and problem gambling rates have remained relatively stable, at less than one per cent over the past five years.

5. However, there are emerging trends that can have a significant impact on the gambling landscape. For example, technology has changed the way people gamble and made it more accessible. Business models have evolved to suit changing customer preferences by introducing gambling elements in products that are traditionally not seen as gambling.

Establishment of the Gambling Regulatory Authority

6. GRA will be established by 2021 and will consolidate and optimise gambling regulatory resources within a single agency. This will allow GRA to stay even more effectively abreast of technological and global trends, respond faster to emerging products in particular those that cut across different domains, and take a more holistic approach to gambling policies and issues.

7. GRA will work with partners such as MSF and the National Council on Problem Gambling to ensure that the harms of gambling continue to be adequately addressed. SPF will continue to enforce the laws against illegal gambling activities.

Review of Gambling Legislation

8. The Government has enacted different laws that govern various gambling products, including lotteries, gaming houses, casinos, and remote gambling. These laws address risks specific to a distinct mode of gambling, and in a particular setting. For example, the Private Lotteries Act only regulates terrestrial private lotteries, which are physical gambling operations such as fruit machine rooms, while the Remote Gambling Act only regulates gambling activities conducted via remote communications (for e.g. the Internet and telephone). [1]

9. MHA will review and amend all gambling legislation by 2021 to ensure that our regulatory mechanisms can effectively address evolving gambling products and business models. For example, we will study the need to regulate products such as “mystery boxes”. [2] We will also review the penalties for offences to ensure consistency across remote and terrestrial gambling.

10. Even as we update our laws, MHA will retain a generally prohibitive stance towards gambling, and continue to maintain a risk-based regulatory approach towards existing gambling operators.

Stakeholder Engagement

11. As part of the upcoming transformation in the gambling regulatory landscape, MHA will engage key stakeholders to take on board their views in the coming year. These include gambling operators, religious organisations, social service agencies, and members of the public.

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

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[1] According to the Remote Gambling Act, remote gambling means gambling in which a person participates by the use of remote communications. Remote communications means communication done through the internet, telephone, television, radio or any other kind of electronic or other technology for facilitating communication.

[2] Mystery boxes refers to games of chance, whether offered via remote or terrestrial means, in which users purchase a box of item(s), and the item(s) within are unknown or of unknown value.

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