

Parliament

New laws at casinos for post-result bet withdrawals, recording of games

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Gamblers at Singapore's two casinos must abide by new laws regarding the withdrawal of bets after results have been announced, and the recording of games on the premises.

With the passing of the Casino Control (Amendment) Bill on Sept 10, it will also be a crime for people to breach family visit limits when the changes take effect.

During the second reading of the Bill in Parliament, Minister of State for Home Affairs Sun Xueling said casino-related crime remains low in Singapore.

Only 0.2 per cent of all crimes reported in 2023 happened at Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa.

That year, 137 criminal cases were reported at both casinos, said the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in August.

MHA said the changes to the Casino Control Act, which was last amended in 2012, are part of a regular review to ensure it keeps up with changes in the gambling industry.

Ms Sun said the Bill was drafted after a review by MHA, the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

She said that, currently, it is only an offence to place a bet after the result is known, but not to withdraw it.

Ten people were investigated for withdrawing their bets between 2010 and 2023, but the police had to use other laws such as theft in dwelling to deal with them.

Also, existing laws state only that recording card games is illegal. The changes will criminalise the act of recording non-card games. MHA said patrons have tried to cheat casinos by recording the play patterns of non-card games such as gaming machines.

Another issue to be addressed is the breaching of a family visit

limit, when patrons visit a casino more times than allowed by their family.

It is now not a crime to do so.

From 2010 to 2023, about five people breached their family visit limits annually.

When the amendments take effect, anyone who exceeds the limit can be jailed for up to a year, or fined up to \$10,000 for a new offence.

Also, those under exclusion orders from casinos will face stricter laws. These are people automatically excluded by law as they are undischarged bankrupts or on social assistance programmes, or banned by their families or the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG).

To prosecute excluded individuals who breach the order, the authorities have to show that they are aware of their exclusion status. This could be hard to prove.

With the changes, it will be a crime as long as the excluded person knows, or ought reasonably to know, about his exclusion status.

For someone who has maxed out his visit limit and is therefore excluded, claiming he had miscounted his visits will not work.

As at the end of December 2023, more than 300,000 people have been barred from entering the casinos, including those who set the ban themselves, according to NCPG data.

Also, minors who refuse to give their particulars, or falsify their age to enter the casinos, will face higher maximum fines of \$10,000, up from the current \$1,000.

Only those aged 21 or older can enter Singapore's casinos.

MHA said that in the past five years, two to four minors each year tried to enter a casino using false evidence of age.

The new law also makes it easier to fight money laundering, by allowing both casinos to share patrons' information with each