

LCQ18: Amusement game machines with gambling elements

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Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kong-wah and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (February 27):

Question:

It is learnt that in recent months some amusement game centres (AGCs) have introduced amusement game machines with gambling elements, which allow players to place their bets with tokens. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether staff of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) had found such type of amusement game machines during their inspections of AGCs in the past two years; if so, of the number of such cases;
- (b) how TELA determines if the games provided by amusement game machines are those subject to regulation by the Gambling Ordinance (Cap. 148); and
- (c) whether it has examined if the introduction of such type of amusement game machines by AGCs will encourage gambling and turn the venues concerned into some sort of gambling establishment; if so, of the outcome?

Reply:

Madam President,

Under the Amusement Game Centres Ordinance (Cap. 435), the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) grants two types of amusement game centres (AGC) licences depending on the age of the customers:

- (A) AGCs for persons who are under the age of 16 years; and
- (B) AGCs for persons who have attained the age of 16 years.

For AGCs of type A, only games approved by the TELA are allowed. Based on TELA's information, currently no machines with gambling elements are installed in

AGCs of type A.

Under the current legislation, games for AGCs of type B are not required to be submitted to the TELA for prior approval. However, in case there is evidence that bet is wagered or paid at the premises or that prizes or cash refunds are given to any person in consequence of the result of any games, the persons-in-charge of the AGCs concerned will be in breach of the Gambling Ordinance and are liable to prosecution by the Police. In addition, if illegal gambling is found in an AGC, the participating customers are also considered to have violated the law. According to the inspections by TELA officers, some games in AGCs are operated by tokens. TELA has reminded those AGCs concerned that no prizes, cash rewards or refunds shall be offered to any person for such operations to avoid breaching the Gambling Ordinance.

TELA will continue to, in the course of on-going inspections, remind the AGC operators not to violate the laws in their operations of the AGCs. Relevant departments including the Police will continue to take enforcement actions upon receipt of complaints.

Ends/Wednesday, February 27, 2008