

# Israel's first casino to be built in Eilat

Tourism Ministry officials have recently closed a deal with the Israel Land Administration to apportion 12 acres of land on Eilat's northern shore for Israel's first legal casino.

Hotels, commercial trading centers and other tourism venues are expected to be established in the area.

Tourism Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch expressed his faith in the project and said this first casino would be the harbinger of additional legal gambling institutes in Israel.

„A casino in Eilat is one of our main objectives for 2008 and its success will lead to the establishment of additional casinos throughout the country. As a former law enforcement official, I can tell those who oppose the idea that a casino would downsize the extent of the illegal gambling operations in Israel as well as the related criminal activities,“ said Aharonovitch, putting the number of illegal gambling facilities in Israel in the hundreds.

„Another important goal is promoting tourism in Eilat, which is losing tourists to neighboring cities like Aqaba, Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh, which have casinos. There is no doubt that building a casino in Eilat will bring economic growth and give a serious boost to the city's tourism,“ he added.

The estimated scope of illegal gambling in Israel stands at over USD 3.6 billion per year.