

Parliament approves Internet gambling law

South Africa's parliament approved a new Internet gambling law to regulate an industry plagued by crime and vulnerable to money laundering and terrorism financing, parliamentary papers showed on Monday.

A memorandum attached to the National Gambling Amendment Bill said the interactive gambling industry in Africa's biggest economy was currently unregulated and „generally plagued“ by crime.

„This situation has resulted in a considerable loss of revenue to the national fiscus and compromises the country's reputation as a responsible global citizen,“ it said.

The new bill aims to address the negative socio-economic effects associated with gambling and deals specifically with issues of problem gambling, player protection, licensing, taxation and advertising.

Every online player would need to be registered with a licensed interactive gambling provider and submit an affidavit to ensure they were older than 18 years.

„The purpose of this Act is to ensure that all gambling activities are conducted responsibly, fairly and honestly (and to) protect minors and other vulnerable persons from the negative effects of gambling,“ it said.

The bill also allowed for an electronic monitoring system to help root out potentially addictive behaviour and restrict credit extensions to players.

President Thabo Mbeki must still sign the bill into law before it comes into effect.

The United States, a major market for website punters, recently banned online gambling, hitting revenues at sites offering a variety of games, including blackjack and roulette.

According to South Africa's National Gambling Board, which will enforce the country's new laws, revenues across all forms of gambling, excluding Internet, increased to 13.5 billion rand in 2006/07 from 6.2 billion rand in 2001/02.