

Liu calls for casino gambling legalization

Taipei, Taiwan – Premier Liu Chao-shiuan called yesterday for legalizing casino gambling on Taiwan's offshore islands, in what some considered to be the first concrete step towards building gambling facilities on islands outside the Taiwan proper.

Liu made the remarks while attending the weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday.

During the meeting, Hu Chung-ying, vice chairman of the Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD), detailed plans to complete seven of the so-called 12 „Love Taiwan“ infrastructure projects.

The seven projects include: stepping up islandwide transportation networks, constructing the Taoyuan Aviation Hub, bringing high-tech firms to central Taiwan, upgrading Kaohsiung City and Kaohsiung Port, boosting leisure tourism in eastern Taiwan, engaging in land conservation and upgrading infrastructure on offshore islands.

On the last project, Premier Liu said the government should first push for legalization of casino gambling on offshore islands to set the stage for future construction of gambling facilities.

Building casinos on Penghu, one of the offshore islands of Taiwan, has been a long-time and divisive issue. Advocates believe this will boost Penghu's tourism industry, while opponents think this will introduce sin and crime to the otherwise peaceful and quiet Pescadore Islands, as Penghu has been known to Westerners for centuries.

Casino gambling is still illegal in Taiwan. In order to build

casinos on offshore islands, the Legislature must first pass a bill to legalize casino gambling on those islands. The Cabinet will then introduce a casino gambling bill that needs to be passed by the Legislature.

Liu's support for offshore gambling legalization is seen as a breakthrough, according to Cabinet officials, as none of the premiers in the past had openly called for it.

The Cabinet meeting also saw the passing of a plan aiming to attract NTS 4 trillion in new investment from private companies over the next four years.

Under the plan, NTS 2 trillion of the new funds will be invested in Taiwan's electronics and information industries.

Also, the government will hold an international investors' forum in October as part of plans to obtain the NTS 4 trillion.

By advancing ties with mainland China through easing restrictions on private investment, Taiwan can attract more foreign funds and boost the economy, Premier Liu said.