

Casinos to be legalized before Chinese New Year

Taipei, Taiwan – Casinos may be set up on offshore islands after the Legislative Yuan legalizes gambling before it adjourns for the winter, the Council for Economic Planning and Development said yesterday.

“We have done all the necessary preparations,” a CEPD official said. “All we are waiting for is the adoption of a gambling bill,” he added.

Lawmakers have completed the second reading of the bill. A third reading will make gambling lawful on the three offshore islands of Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu before the Chinese New Year.

The long Chinese New Year holiday starts on next January 24. The nation’s highest legislative organ is scheduled to adjourn one day earlier. President Ma Ying-jeou proposed to let offshore islands open casinos during his campaign. The bill was drawn up shortly after Ma had been inaugurated.

A referendum has to be held at a locality where a casino is proposed, the CEPD official said. “And it has to be voted for by a simple majority,” he added. When the gambling act goes into force, Penghu or the Pescadores is likely to be the first county to open a casino. Penghu has been calling for legalized gambling for 10 years. A non-binding referendum has been held. Only a 21 minority took part but 56 percent of them voted for legalized gambling.