

# Turkish lottery tender extended

The bidding process for the privatization of the Turkish national lottery, Milli Piyango, has been extended by a little more than one month from its January 15 deadline at the request of investors.

Privatization authorities told the Reuters news agency that interested parties now have until February 27 to apply for pre-qualification in order to tender a bid. "There is no shortage of interest from investors in the national lottery," said Metin Kilci, Chairman for the nation's Privatization Administration. "We expect that the privatization process will be completed successfully."

In November, Turkey's National Lottery Administration reported total earnings of USD 4.4 billion for the previous five years while awarding USD 1.9 billion in prizes and paying some USD 2.3 billion in tax.

The privatization of several Turkish State-owned businesses has made strong progress over the past few years due to strong interest from investors but has stalled recently as the global financial slowdown undermines appetite. "I am optimistic for 2009," Kilci told Reuters. "This does not mean that I am taking this crisis lightly. We expect that there will be a relative improvement in 2009."

Companies or consortia already known to be interested in purchasing the Milli Piyango business include GTech-Lottomatica, Essnet-Tattersall, Scientific Games, Camelot, OPAP, Intralot, Turkey's Koc Holding, Austrian Lotteries, Sisal, Dogus Group, Alarko and Cukurova Group.