

Is the night economy a nightmare? a critical analysis of the law relating to gaming and gambling in Sri Lanka

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Gaming and gambling have been part of the Sri Lankan society throughout its history, and they often clash with the attitudinal beliefs of most of the people. On the other hand, it is high time to accept that with the impact of globalization, communities evolve and embrace changes to mingle with international communities and markets. The current Covid 19 situation has also triggered this by normalizing online platforms for almost everything including entertainment activities such as online gaming and gambling too. This backdrop has created a background and justification of this research to perceive whether the current legal and policy landscape on gaming and gambling is competent enough to address the issues and modern trends. Therefore, this paper intends to critically evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the current legal framework for gaming and gambling in Sri Lanka by utilizing mainly a qualitative approach supported by findings through one-to-one interviews with relevant stakeholders to ascertain the practical issues. Among many other observations, it is significant to note that the current system is created emphasising more greatly on the regulation than promotion and the recent Colombo Port City Economic Commission Act, No. 11 of 2021 has also created a double-edged sword in this regard. However, the comparative study of India and the United Kingdom as a benchmark reveals many exemplary attributes of a modern and balanced legal and policy approach in addressing the issues relating to these commercial activities. Based on them, this paper concludes with recommendations that the existing legal framework needs to be updated specially to address the modern trends such as online gambling and a comprehensive policy framework with a competent authority should be in place to foster economic benefits while preserving stakeholder protection through a holistic vision.

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