

IRs 'should look beyond casinos'

By **LEE XIN EN**

THE two integrated resorts (IRs) should rely on more than their casinos to attract tourists, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office S. Iswaran said yesterday.

They must have "a menu of other attractions" around the casinos, and these attractions must be maintained at a standard that will continue to attract visitors.

"We are looking with an eye to the future, not about the first two or three years, but about the next 10 or 15 years," he told reporters while speaking about the amendments to the Casino Control Act.

Proposed changes include setting up an evaluation panel to ensure the IRs continue to develop, maintain and promote themselves as compelling tourist destina-

tions. Details of the panel have not been released.

Industry observers said this move was timely.

Mr Jonathan Galaviz, managing director of tourism industry consultancy Galaviz and Co, said such a panel would allow Singaporeans to communicate to the Government "the realities of whether the IRs are focusing on tourism development or casino gaming marketing".

Ms Alicia Seah, senior vice-president of marketing and public relations at CTC Travel, said it was good the Government was stepping in to get IRs to "step up their game, as using casinos to attract tourists is not sustainable".

She said that while Marina Bay Sands (MBS) is seen to have done more publicity and rejuvenation

of their offerings with a stream of new shows, Resorts World Sentosa's (RWS) shows like Voyage de la Vie have been around for a long time.

She also felt that the IRs' attractions were not being publicised enough overseas. "Singapore is a destination where most attractions are man-made, making publicity crucial," she said.

Both IRs were quick to point out their stream of new attractions yesterday.

An RWS spokesman said its upcoming Marine Life Park will be the largest oceanarium in the world. MBS said its blockbuster Titanic exhibition was the most well-attended museum exhibition in Singapore ever, with more than 286,000 visitors.

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