

Politics

CASINO DEVELOPMENT



Casino could be on the cards for Laguna Lang Co resort

Prim Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc has taken the first steps towards allowing a casino to be added to the Laguna Lang Co resort in central Vietnam, with the new venue potentially ready to open by 2021.

At the request of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Phuc signed off on a proposal to allow the resort to increase its total investment capital from \$875m to \$2bn at a working session with officials from the central province of Thua Thien-Hue on 2 January.

Singapore-listed developer Banyan Tree Holdings, which operates a hotel at the Laguna property, has spent years lobbying the government to add a casino to the resort, and company representatives met with the prime minister a day prior to the working session.

The rise in investment capital is a key step towards such a development, given that Vietnam's new



VIETNAM

casino legislation requires investors looking to build a gambling venue to commit to spend minimum of \$2bn.

The Vietnam Investment Review cited a Banyan Tree spokesman as saying the licence agreement would pave the way to begin work on a detailed project with an international investor, while last July, Hard Rock International confirmed that it was an interested party.

According to media reports, the investor's plan projects that the casino would open its doors by 2021 with 500 electronic gaming machines and 50 card shufflers. These figures are expected to increase to 2,000 machines and 200 card shufflers by 2029.

The development would also see the addition of six five-star hotels and more than 2,200 villas and apartments.

If approved, Laguna Lang Co will contribute \$245m to the province's budget each year from 2021.

"The likelihood of a [Laguna Lang Co] casino resort in Hue is reason-

ably good, however, we believe any casino on this property will be small in scale and will be used as a lure to bring in buyers of beach front villas and condos," stated Eric Coskun, senior associate at IGamiX Management and Consulting.

However he suggests that the resort would suffer from competition from other properties in the region which are situated nearer to key transport hubs.

"Given that the only way to get there is through Da Nang airport and a minimum 2.5 hour drive, it is too far for players, especially when you have Crown International in Da Nang itself and Hoi An only 30 minutes away," he concluded.

The Laguna Lang Co resort opened in 2013, and is located near Lang Co Bay on the north central coast of Vietnam. The first phase of development included a 57-villa resort operated by Banyan Tree, as well as the 229-room Angsana resort, convention facilities, and an 18-hole championship golf course.