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Macau hotel marks first of several non-gaming projects this year



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Wednesday night's grand opening of The Harbourview Hotel, part of the Macau Fisherman's Wharf theme park redevelopment site, marks the first of several non-gaming related projects planned for this year in Macau.

The wave of new projects comes amid eight months of consecutive gambling revenue losses as China's corruption crackdown hit the former Portuguese enclave and Beijing urges the local government to diversify the region's economy from its overreliance on the gaming tables.

"This year we'll start seeing a change of emphasis in Macau. Many of the gaming operators will turn towards non-gaming products, offering entertainment, different retail options and leisure products," said Glenn McCartney, assistant professor of hospitality and gaming management at the University of Macau.

Despite all the new projects in the pipeline, it will take a lot more than several new venues to diversify Macau's economy, said Ben Lee, managing partner at IGamiX Management & Consulting, a Macau-based gaming consultancy.

"The diversification of the economy is a long-term project. There are now several structural problems, and we need to have things like a work force," he said. Several sectors in Macau have faced labour shortages over the past few years.

With 389 rooms and 55 suites, and a decorative style based on 18th century Prague, the Harbourview Hotel was completed in November last year and had its soft-opening on February 2.

The 4-star hotel, owned by Macau Legend Development and built at a reported cost of HK\$1.5 billion, is connected via footbridges to an adjacent slot hall called Flamingo Casino, and the Babylon Casino, which features 35 new gaming tables.

The redevelopment of the waterfront theme park includes two other hotels, an opera house and a yacht club.

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