

Asian casino plan looks to Colorado

Colorado businesses could help shape the development of a USD 10 million casino and resort project in Vietnam, one of a number of countries in Asia looking to expand their gambling operations.

The chairman of a Vietnamese development company was in town last week to drum up potential partners for his project in Phan Rang, Vietnam, about 210 miles from Ho Chi Minh City.

Thong Ngoc Huynh, founder and chairman of Paven Co. Ltd. in Ho Chi Minh City, met with local businesses such as Dye Designs, a golf course designer, RNL Designs, an architecture firm, and Western Union, the money-transfer giant.

Huynh's visit was arranged by Kip Cheroutes, a local public relations veteran who is friends with an associate of Huynh's.

„I'd call this exploratory business, relationship building and academic exchange," said Cheroutes. „Dye is interested in further investigation of (Huynh's) resort development."

Mutual associate Chau Ngoc Tran is editor of The Saigon Times, a daily newspaper. Tran spoke about Vietnam's economy at the University of Denver last week as part of the visit.

Huynh, who speaks very little English, also toured Black Hawk to get a glimpse of how its casinos operate.

„I plan on building a smaller casino, so hopefully I can use a casino here as a model," Huynh said in Vietnamese.

In Vietnam, developers are required to receive separate licenses for a resort and a casino. Huynh said he already has the resort license and is in the process of receiving a casino license. Huynh's project will include a small casino, a 218-

room hotel, a conference center and a sports complex.

There are two casinos in Vietnam, according to Casino City, an independent casino information directory. Huynh said the government recently granted a gaming license to another developer, and three more are in the works.

„In Asia generally, and in Southeast Asia as well, there’s a lot of focus on developing gaming as a competitive device to counter some of the gaming activities that are going on in places like Macau, which is attracting a great amount of tourism,“ said William Palermo, chief executive of Gaming & Resort Development, a casino-consulting firm based in Laguna Niguel, Calif.

Macau, which borders the South China Sea and mainland China, is regarded by some as the Las Vegas of the East. Billionaire Sheldon Adelson’s Las Vegas Sands is in the midst of building one of the world’s largest casinos there featuring thousands of slot machines and hundreds of gaming tables.

Vietnam’s casinos are much smaller. Do Son Casino in Hai Phong has 100 slot machines and seven table games, according to Casino City. Royal International Gaming Club in Ha Long City has 70 slot machines and 18 table games.