

Japanese hold key in Galaxy casino bet

Galaxy Entertainment Group (0027), part owned by mid-sized developer K Wah International Holdings (0173), will bring in a partner as it seeks to be the first Macau casino operator to introduce Japanese games, market sources said yesterday.

The sources said Galaxy aims to be the first Macau casino to break into the market for Japanese high-rollers. The firm, controlled by Lui Che-woo, will introduce the games at its GalaxyWorld Resort on the Cotai Strip.

The Japanese partner will help develop the games and court VIPs.

The Japanese market, supported by a strong yen, is thought to be an untapped source of revenue that could help offset competition among junket operators who focus on mainland VIP gamblers.

The resort will be the second entertainment complex to open on the strip. The Venetian Macao was the first. Phase one of the Galaxy resort is set for completion by the end of next year.

Trading in K Wah shares was suspended yesterday pending an announcement in relation to a „major and connected transaction.“

K Wah declined to comment. Galaxy shares have been suspended since 2.30pm last Friday.

Galaxy spokesman Peter Caveny said a „a very significant, newsworthy“ announcement would be made this week.

He declined to comment on the talk of a Japanese partner.

„We are approached by various partners all the time,“ he said.

„We have been actively reviewing potential partner opportunities in all parts of the world.“

In the first eight months of the year, just 178,245 Japanese residents visited Macau, representing 1.03 percent of all visitor arrivals.

In comparison, 54.74 percent of visitors came from the mainland, 31.28 percent from Hong Kong, 5.52 percent from Taiwan, while 0.83 percent came from South Korea.