

Construction of Philippines' Las Vegas version to start by 2009

After several hurdles – ranging from regulatory to moral issues – the construction of Entertainment City, touted as the Philippines' Las Vegas version, is finally set to start by early next year.

The local government of Paranaque recently gave its official endorsement for the project's tourism ecozone status, the last in its long list of pre-construction requirements. The city hall resolution provides tax incentives and real property tax postponement to investors

„We expect to begin construction of the project by first quarter of next year. The project will then take about five years to complete,“ Philippine Amusement & Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) President Rafael Francisco said. Government-run PAGCOR is bankrolling the project.

The Entertainment City, which is expected to pull in total investments of around USD 15 billion, lies on a 150-hectare reclaimed property near the SM Mall of Asia. It is envisioned to have about 6 to 8 hotels, theme parks, shopping malls and other recreational establishments.

Francisco said three big companies have already expressed interest to invest in the project, namely Japan's Aruze Corp., Alliance Global, and the SM Group of Companies.

„This project will result in about 400,000 jobs, including the multiplier effect it will have on contractors, cement producers, and other establishments to be built around the Entertainment city,“ Francisco said

The local government of Paranaque expects to earn from the project revenues of about P500 million in revenues every year.

Communities around the area initially balked at the project due to concerns on prostitution.