

## **U.S. casino giants bet on Japan, raising addiction fears**

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 28 August 2019 02:52 -

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Since the enactment of a law in July 2018 allowing legalized casinos to open in Japan, large-scale resort operators from the United States have been boosting their promotional activities to enter the fray of Japan's budding casino market.

With the government's integrated resorts promotion law set to allow up to three coveted gaming licenses for the development of casino resorts around the country, a potential market worth by some predictions 2 trillion yen a year (\$18 billion), U.S. casino giants are staking their chips for what they hope will be a big payout.

Although expectations are high in Japan for substantial economic gains, including job creation, the potential involvement of such high-end casino operators as Wynn Resorts Ltd. and MGM Resorts International has added to widespread public concern about a rise in gambling addiction and negative social impacts.

At a press conference held for Japanese media in a suburb of the U.S. city of Boston on July 24, Wynn Resorts Development Japan President Chris Gordon spoke at length of the company's desire to build the "world's largest" integrated resort in a city such as Tokyo, Osaka or Yokohama.



*(Chris Gordon)*

The term integrated resort, or IR, refers to a comprehensive entertainment complex that, alongside casinos, incorporates facilities such as shopping malls, theaters, hotels and theme parks. The locations for the three IRs are expected to be chosen by next year at the earliest.

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One of the biggest components of an IR envisioned by Wynn Resorts would be throwing its door open to organizers of so-called MICE -- meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions -- events, explained Gordon.

Also facing concerns about deteriorating public safety linked with gambling when it opened its latest resort in the United States, the \$2.6 billion Encore Boston Harbor located in Everett, Massachusetts, which opened on June 23, Wynn Resorts footed the bill for the hiring of 20 additional local police officers, Gordon said.

It also spent some \$65 million (6.8 billion yen) on road improvements to the 33-acre property, which opened public access to the waterfront for the first time in over a century.

Gordon was also keen to note that the Encore Boston Harbor casino project got the nod from a major academic district just 6.5 kilometers away, which includes Harvard University.

In June, the IR promotion bureau in Osaka Prefecture and the city of Osaka announced that seven casino operators were vying against each other after sending in early request-for-concept documents for a gaming license in Osaka. Under the new legislation, the casino resorts are due to begin operating in the mid-2020s.

Among those making pitches in Osaka were Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas Sands Corp. and MGM Resorts International, which has teamed up with Japanese financial group Orix Corp.

Of the non-U.S. companies, Hong-Kong based Melco Resorts and Entertainment Ltd. and Genting Singapore Ltd. are also said to be in the running, while two other companies have not made their bids or concepts public yet.

Las Vegas Sands recently dropped out of the Osaka race, saying it will instead focus on developing a resort in the Tokyo and Yokohama areas. MGM Resorts' chief executive Jim Murren has said his company "remains deeply committed" to developing a resort in Osaka.

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