Sentosa's Tiger Sky Tower to close on Dec 28

The Sky Tower starting operating in 2004 and has had nearly five million visitors. PHOTO: SKYTOWER

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SINGAPORE - The Tiger Sky Tower on Sentosa will be closing on Dec 28 this year, almost a year after it reopened following a stalling incident.

However, in a statement on Tuesday (Oct 23), its managing director Alexander Melchers said the closure is not due to the fault. The company did not come to an agreement with Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) to renew the lease, it said.

It also said the Sky Tower will be moved and rebuilt in another country.

The ascending gondola stopped moving at the 25m mark on Aug 12 last year, trapping 39 passengers - including children and the elderly - for more than four hours.

As a result, the ride, which reaches a height of 131m above sea level, was closed for more than three months.

It reopened only in November last year with permission from the Building and Construction Authority. It was revealed in a report that the breakdown was caused by a drive unit that overheated and the rescue was hampered by the failure of the manual winch used to bring the gondola to the ground.

The ride, which has a capacity of 72, also faced such stalling issues twice in 2010.

The Sky Tower starting operating in 2004 and has had nearly five million visitors, said the statement. It was also the first attraction on Sentosa to receive foreign direct investment.

Mr Melchers said in the statement that the closure is "definitely not" because of the technical fault last year.

"The discussions with SDC were very sincere and detailed, but we could not agree on the commercial terms to continue operations," he said, adding that the two have enjoyed a very good partnership. SDC is the statutory board that manages and promotes tourism activities on the island.

"The Sky Tower still is a future-proof technology and could have been operated at Sentosa for many years. Therefore the company is now looking to find a new location for the Sky Tower outside of Singapore," he added.

Mr Melchers cited a similar ride at Ocean Park in Hong Kong, which has been operating for more than 25 years, as an example of the "relevance and reliability of such iconic viewing platforms".

A spokesman from SDC told The Straits Times that the attraction's lease was due to expire in March next year, but Sky Tower decided to cease operations in December.

She added that there is no extension clause in the current lease and Sky Tower decided not to take up a fresh lease after discussions between the two parties.

"SDC is working with Sky Tower on its cessation plans," she said. "We would like to assure our guests that SDC will refresh the site with exciting offerings as part of our continual efforts to curate and offer a diverse array of attractive leisure experiences for all to enjoy in Sentosa."

Dr Michael Chiam, senior tourism lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, said: "It is a pity that the Tiger Sky Tower will be closed for good... it is almost an icon in that part of the island, maybe because of its height."

However, he added that he does not think the closure will have any major impact on visitor numbers in Sentosa. "This is because not everyone who goes to Sentosa goes there just to have a ride in the gondola. There are plenty of other attractions to go to in Sentosa."

From next Thursday (Nov 1) until its closure, the Sky Tower will reduce ticket prices as a gesture of appreciation, said the statement.

Adults will pay $8.80 a ride and children, $4.80, instead of the usual $18 and $10 respectively.

The ride is located at Sentosa's Imbiah Lookout and moving works will likely begin in early January next year, according to the statement.