

May 2015

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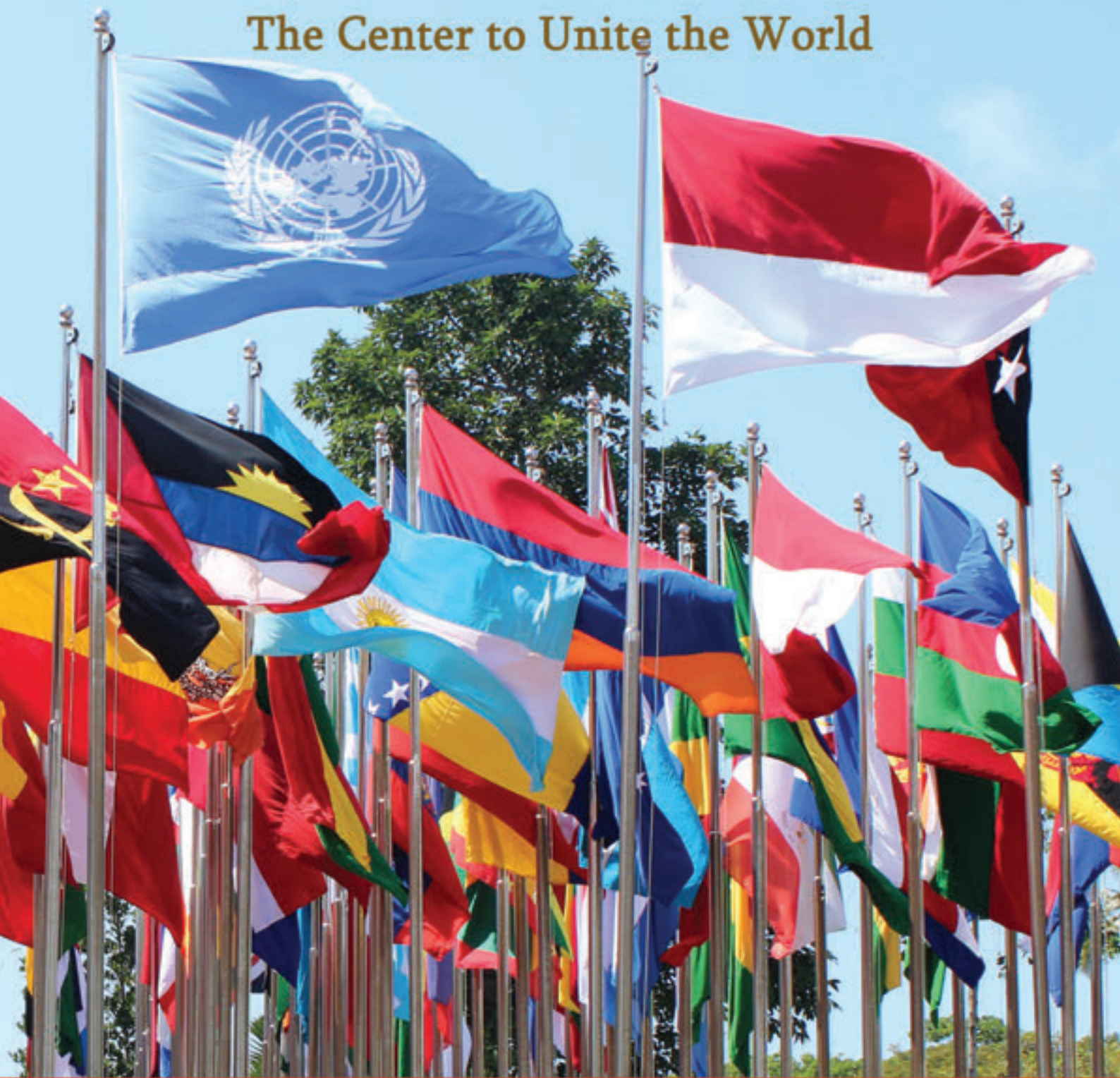
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Senior Editor

Asian associations find their voice

We often see the collective people in an association as we do a school of koi carp, often missing the individual fishes in the pond.

They are without faces, much like a multiplied gray head in an infogram to express number of people. Yet, far less-deserving individuals have been celebrated in our industry than association leaders, many of whom are volunteers who have done a lot of good for their profession, the society-at-large and the meetings sector.

In the course of my work, I have seen the persons in a people through one-on-one press interviews. At last month's Great Ideas! in Association Management Conference in Hong Kong, which the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) held in Asia-Pacific for the first time, I met a few more. To my astonishment, I was also witnessing something of a history in the making. Asian association leaders want their voice heard. Advancing their professional field is not their only purpose, they want to advance the field of associations itself. A charter, signed on the sidelines of the conference, laid the bricks for Asia-Pacific's societies of association executives to collaborate with one another and help build efficient and sustainable associations, change the image of association executives from faceless to fiesty, and power up the sector's advocacy role.

I was also astonished that in Asia (excluding Australia/New Zealand), there are only two societies of association executives to-date, one in the Philippines and the other in South Korea. As I wrote in *In Focus* this issue (see page 12), it is ironic that the very people who do association work do not themselves have a platform to forge a sense of belonging, advance their profession and learn what it takes to create strong associations.

But considering that the Council for the Advancement of Association Executives was formed in November 2013, on its heels the Korean Society of Association Executives (KSAE) exactly a year later and now, barely months after KSAE, the charter towards the eventual formation of an Asia-Pacific Federation of Association Organizations, the movement is picking up speed. The challenge is to ensure it remains robust for, no matter how passionate the proponents behind it are, time and resources are short and, yet again, it is all voluntary.

They could do with support. Asian CVBs, for instance, which have been encouraging associations to bid for congresses, can look into this latest effort and see if they are able to egg it on.

After all, koi carps in Asia are bred as a symbol good fortune, success, prosperity, longevity, courage, ambition and perseverance.

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COVER STORY

18 Large unique venues in Asia

End your search for special venues that can accommodate large gatherings. *TTGmice* reporters in the region put on their searchlights and come up with this list of large unique venues that will enable you to show off the destination and your hospitality in style

COUNTRY REPORTS

30 More for MICE in Macau

New hotels opening this year are adding accommodation and event capacity to the destination, putting a downward pressure on rates. By Prudence Lui

33 Rebound on the horizon

Chinese MICE groups are starting to favour Malaysia again, with a proper rebound likely once Air China resumes Beijing flights. By S Puvaneswary

36 Something new to love in Paris

The city's CVB is spotlighting new and revitalised venues to draw South-east Asian groups, writes Paige Lee Pei Qi

DEPARTMENTS

- 1 To our readers
- 4 Marketplace
- 6 Talk of the trade
- 10 Client files
- 12 In focus
- 14 Case studies
- 17 Appointments
- 38 Over coffee with...
- 40 Gallery



Double the size... Unlimited experiences

A stellar line-up of experiences awaits MICE guests at the newly expanded Galaxy Macau and opening of Broadway Macau.

Macau's Galaxy Entertainment Group is set to unveil two of its highly anticipated projects in May — the expansion of its flagship integrated resort Galaxy Macau™ and the new Broadway Macau entertainment zone. The expansion will double Galaxy Macau's size to 1.1 million sqm, and introduce a whole new array of exciting experiences. Broadway Macau will be a family-oriented integrated resort on its own, linked by an air-conditioned sky-bridge to Galaxy Macau. Together, these two properties will create a spectacular new venue for business and entertainment at Macau's vibrant MICE district of Cotai.

Extraordinary MICE

Some of the world's most prestigious hotel brands will debut at Galaxy Macau, giving MICE planners an inventory of almost 4,000 rooms, suites and villas. The Ritz-Carlton, Macau will be the brand's first all-suite property with more than 250 suites. JW Marriott Hotel Macau will be Asia's largest with more than 1,000 rooms, while the new Broadway Hotel will offer 320 well-appointed rooms. Banyan Tree Macau, Hotel Okura Macau and Galaxy Hotel™ round up the line-up, a superb collection of world-class accommodation suitable for meeting groups.



These hotels offer not only rooms but also a fine selection of venues for meetings, incentives and special events, capable of catering for over 3,000 guests.

Dining options will also expand considerably to cover a wider range of styles and price points. On the high end, a new level of indulgence can be found in the form of three world-class restaurants: Fook Lam Moon, Lai Heen, and 8½ Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA (helmed by three-Michelin-star chef Umberto Bombana). At Broadway Macau, new outlets will feature a wide selection of Asian favourites and authentic Macanese cuisines. The number of restaurants, bars and lounges at Galaxy Macau will grow to more than 120.

Shop in Style

The new heart of shopping in Cotai can be found at The Promenade, which boasts more than 200 luxury and lifestyle brands. In the ambience of a sophisticated urban village, shoppers will discover the best of high-street fashion and lifestyle, including first-to-Macau brands such as Alexander Wang, Moncler, and Qeelin. Also present are top-line brands from style capitals of the world such as Burberry, Bottega Veneta, Bvlgari, Lanvin, and Louis Vuitton.



MEETING PACKAGES

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Leisure & Entertainment

A star attraction at Galaxy Macau is the Grand Resort Deck, now expanded with Skytop Adventure Rapids, home to the world's longest Skytop Aquatic Adventure River Ride at 575m. The Skytop Wave Pool itself remains the world's largest and is quite a sight. The Asian-themed tropical gardens, white sand beach, exhilarating waterslides, beach lagoons, white water rapids, geysers, water falls and a kids zone all add to the Grand Resort Deck's wow features.

The new entertainment district called The Broadway is alive with hawker-style vendors, live entertainers and street performances. The Broadway Theatre, with 3,000 seats, will complement UA Galaxy Cinemas — Macau's most luxurious 10-screen 3D cineplex. ■



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We love



Crazy awesome

Few establishments would dare hail themselves as 'awesome' but My Awesome Cafe in Singapore is one nut case where the place is actually more awesome than the word itself.

Creating aching nostalgia that appeals to a Google-oogle generation is not easy and while the frontage of this cafe indeed looks straight out of a leaf from the picturebook of a bygone era, inside it is filled with a lunchtime crowd comprising New-Gen executives who appear so at ease in it as if the venue has been there forever for them. It opened in August last year.

Located in a local neighbourhood in the CBD area, My Awesome Cafe is now 'the address with the most' along Telok Ayer Street – the most colourful, the most character, the most patrons.

It's more than feng shui that pulls them in. First, it's the charm of a heritage building, Chung Hwa Free Clinic, which used to dispense traditional medicine, and it's nice that nowhere are there signs of the name My Awesome Cafe on the frontage. Then, it's the whimsical and personalised decor, a motley collection of vintage knick-knacks and reclaimed furniture like 1980s school desks and classroom fans.

It's also the simple, no-fuss, delicious and generous-portion food choices – salads and sandwiches, cheeses and freshly-baked savouries and cakes – barista coffee and a good selection of wines.

Fourth, it's the communal-style eating which appeals to the New-Gen who wants to be 'alone together'. Fifth it is quirky, crazy and happy. Look at those hanging lanterns by the dozens that are lit even during the day, and that motto on the wall...we clap, share, forgive, celebrate, love...

My Awesome Cafe is open for private events "that are edgy, different, quirky, with a touch of surprise", said owner Franck Hardy, who signs off his emails with "love and happiness". It is open daily but is closed for dinner on Sundays.

202 Telok Ayer Street; tel: (+65) 8428-0102; email: franck@myawesomecafe.com; www.MyAwesomeCafe.com – Raini Hamdi

MyCEB launches online MICE venue directory

Event planning in Malaysia has become a little easier now that the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has introduced an online venue directory.

The directory provides a complete profile of each venue, including a description of the space, floor plans, accessibility, amenities, photos and contact information.

Meeting and event planners can search for venues by the type of venue space, location and event category.

Zulkefli Haji Sharif, CEO of MyCEB, said: "We certainly hope that meeting and event planners will find this resource useful, and that our industry partners will continue working with us to keep the directory up-to-date so we can continue to successfully attract world-class meetings and events."



Conrad Maldives dedicates island for incentives, meetings

It must be nice to own two islands – you always have one to spare. Conrad Maldives is offering one of its islands, Rangali Island, exclusively for the expanding meetings and incentives market.

The adults-only island can accommodate up to 100 delegates for private hire and has 50 upmarket water villas, restaurants and other facilities, including a wine cellar with the largest stock in the country.

Kimberley Roberts, Conrad's director for marketing and communications, said: "The concept has been designed in an effort to attract high-end groups looking for the ultimate location with the facilities and amenities to cater to the group's requirements."

Have any unfulfilled dreams of being a proud (albeit temporary) owner of an island? Anyone looking to organise incentives, weddings or meetings have the opportunity to completely buy out Rangali Island for their events. – Feizal Samath



Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

Greener, more socially responsible meetings for Banyan Tree

Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts is pushing for a bigger share of the regional MICE market with a new meetings programme and a dedicated meeting and event website for event planners.

In a new programme, Banyan Tree incorporates volunteerism and CSR elements, and works with EarthCheck to measure how much carbon is generated during meetings to aid clients in holding carbon-free meetings.

Vice president for sales and marketing David Spooner said: "We observed (a demand for) responsible meetings and the trend of more engagement in CSR, incorporated with experiencing the local flavours of food and entertainment."

Meanwhile the group will continue to boost awareness of Banyan Tree and sister brand Angsana's MICE capabilities. "A lot of MICE organisers... think we only do leisure groups and couples. In fact, we do have a demand for small executive retreats, incentives and board meetings."

Banyan Tree launched a dedicated MICE page in January (www.banyantree.com/en/meetings-events), with one for Angsana in the works.

"Meeting organisers can look for functional information like capacity charts and size of meeting rooms via their mobile phones, laptops and tablets. Moreover, the site also features Destination Dining for meeting organisers who need special and exclusive dining options like al fresco dining on top of a mountain," said Spooner. – **Prudence Lui**



Happy hour round the clock in Melbourne

Eat, drink and be merry in Munich Brauhaus, a traditional Bavarian beerhaus, where guests are invited to dine and drink like Oktoberfest never ended!

What would delight meeting planners is that this 900-seater waterfront German beerhall is located in the heart of South Wharf, which is a literal step away from the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. This saves planners the massive hassle of planning for shuttle bus services already.

You will be spoilt for choice as to where to host your guests within the venue itself because the hall is split between three distinct zones separated by two mezzanine structures. Featuring two bars and three private function rooms that comes with audio visual capabilities, flexibility is the key word here.

Cocktail parties for small groups of 20 guests through to 1,100 party goers can be catered for within this diverse space. Lunch and dinner events can be accommodated from 10 to 400, while meetings and conferences for up to 70 within the private "Ein Stein" dining room. Opt for the 250 waterfront seats if you want to further impress your guests; even better if they are in time to catch the sunset across the renowned Yarra River.

Clearly paying homage to their beer, Munich Brauhaus, brings a stein-full of Bavarian cheer with their signature Munich Lager, as well as exclusively imported beers. Of course not to forget the food, the set menus here feature Bavarian classics, including pretzels, pork sausages, pork belly, crispy pork knuckles, and the suckling pig, sourced locally from Riverlea and cooked over a charcoal spit. Now, that is some serious pork business! – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



HOT DEALS

Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay

This city hotel is advocating green meetings through a range of Green Meeting packages, priced from S\$72++ (US\$52++) per person.

Eco-pens, made of recycled newspapers in Indonesia, come part of the packages. Funds collected will be used to run workshops and financially support the underprivileged employed by the Yayasan Peduli Tunas Bangsa Accor Foundation.

Delegates will also get to contribute to Plant for the Planet. For every 40 meeting packages booked, the hotel will plant one tree in the plantation sites of Pemalang, Central Java. A certificate of participation and support indicating the number of trees planted on the company's behalf will be sent to the top 20 supporting companies every three months.

From now until September 30, 2015, a discount of 10 per cent will be offered for bookings of the Green Meetings packages. Terms & conditions apply.

Email H5993-SM3@accor.com.



JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong

The hotel is offering special rates for smaller-sized business events through its Executive Meeting Suite Package.

Rental of these meeting suites on the 30th floor costs HK\$5,000 (US\$645) nett for four hours, either from 09.00 to 13.00 or 14.00 to 18.00. A refreshment break can be added on at a special rate of HK\$300 per person. For a full-day meeting, the room rental will be at HK\$8,000 nett for up to eight hours, from 09.00 to 17.00, with the option to include one roll-in meeting lunch and two refreshment breaks at HK\$600 per pax. Both packages include complimentary Wi-Fi and use of LCD projector with screen.

Events held at the JW Marriott Ballroom can also utilise a new high-definition LED wall to deliver greater visual impact. Packages are available from HK\$8,800.

Terms & conditions apply.

Email jwmarriott.hk@marriott.com.



Singapore gets a bigger budget for MICE marketing

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) will be enhancing the the Lion City's MICE appeal through a 35 per cent increase in marketing investment this year.

While STB assistant chief executive, Neeta Lachmandas, was unable to provide the exact amount of the investment, she said it would be a "substantial sum" channelled into brand building through PR activities, advertising and increased participation in tradeshows.

Lachmandas added: "In the US and Europe markets, we are targeting the association conventions as well as exhibition and conference event organisers; in Asia-Pacific, we see big-

ger opportunities for corporate meetings and incentives."

According to Singapore's second minister for trade and industry, S Iswaran, STB is on track to secure more best-in-class exhibitions and conferences, and has made good progress towards the annual target of securing 10 new association world congresses.



Iswaran: seeing good congress wins

New large-scale events this year include the Oriflame Diamond Conference 2015, Best-World Convention 2015, USANA Asia & Pacific Convention 2015, Forever Living Global Rally 2015 and Jeunesse Global Expo Unite Annual World Conference. They are expected to attract more than 24,000 business delegates altogether.

Chinese MICE business up as ringgit value goes down

The devaluation of the Malaysian ringgit against major currencies is added value for Chinese MICE planners and organisers holding events in Malaysia.

At press time, the ringgit has depreciated 13.4 and 14.2 per cent against the US dollar and renminbi respectively compared with a year ago.

Mint Leong, managing director of major Malaysian operator Sunflower Holidays, shared: "This is a good time to visit Malaysia because of the cost savings, despite the GST which came into force nationwide on April 1. A four-night programme in Malaysia with full-board, twin-share accommodation and one-day sightseeing tour in Kuala Lumpur offers savings of US\$50 per person.

"When we visit corporate companies with our travel consultant counterparts in China, we pitch Malaysia as an affordable incentive destination where their top management can save money."

Leong added the depreciation of the ringgit is partly the reason for the increased number of enquiries the company has received so far this year. The company has also intensified its promotional efforts and will host potential buyers on fam trips to

Malaysia.

She said: "We see the ringgit depreciation as an opportunity to attract more MICE groups from China and we are going all out."

Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours is also taking advantage of the weakened ringgit, seeing it as an opportunity to attract business from competing destinations like Thailand and Indonesia.

CEO Alex Lee said: "The impact of the GST is cushioned by the weakened ringgit and still translates to overall savings for MICE organisers.

"Thus, to draw them to Malaysia and for our company to stand out from the crowd, we have introduced creative itineraries in the East Coast for incentive travellers.

"The Chinese love the water so we offer snorkelling off Terengganu where the corals and marine life are great, followed by barbecues on quiet beaches and activities like tele-matches. A small niche is interested in local culture, so we organise private viewings of *Makyung* and *Menora* performances in Kelantan and Terengganu. Participants also get to interact with the artists. By being creative, we've seen some signs of recovery in the Chinese MICE market." – S Puvaneswary

MD Events expands global network

By Karen Yue

US-based MD Events has opened an office each in Singapore and Sacramento, bringing its current global network of operations to six.

The two new offices, joining existing ones in London, St Petersburg, Philadelphia and Hong Kong, will comprise three divisions to deliver MD Events' specialisation in Life Sciences, Corporate and Destination Management.

General manager Tarquin Scadding-Hunt said in a press statement that MD Events needs to base its services where clients need them.

"Singapore is a hotbed of business for a number of industries, especially pharmaceutical R&D, which was demonstrated recently with companies like Takeda and GSK establishing a presence there. There is lots of activity in the US West Coast and we think it is a logical step to expand our footprint in the US," explained Scadding-Hunt.



Tan: keen to grow business beyond life sciences sector

Jowyn Tan, account director of Asia and Australia, expects all three divisions in the Singapore office to flourish.

"Singapore is home to regional headquarters within Asia for the pharmaceutical

industry and we are expecting at least a 30 per cent increase in meetings for the Life Sciences division within the next five years. The Corporate division is specially tailored for new and existing clients dealing in non-life sciences meetings. We will be increasing our client base to other industries including IT, electronics, banking & finance, and insurance, etc. Meanwhile, our DMC division allows us to demonstrate our knowledge of Asia and Australia. We will expand our client base to event companies that are not based in this region," said Tan.

While most of the current demand for the US, specifically the West Coast, is from the North-east corridor, Agnès Canonica, general manager of the Americas, expects Asian demand to rise five years from now.

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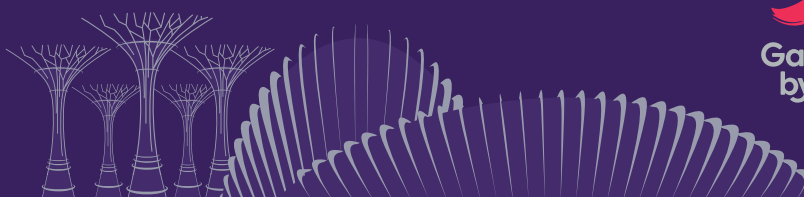
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Malaysian capital city establishes tourism bureau and MICE desk

By S Puvaneswary

In line with the city's 10-year master plan for more tourists, Kuala Lumpur will upgrade the City Hall tourism unit to a tourism bureau with a dedicated MICE desk component in 2H2015.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall's head of tourism, Noraza Yusof, said the bureau and MICE desk will be headed by a COO who will in turn report to Kuala Lumpur mayor, Ahmad Phasal Talib.

The MICE desk's tasks will include the development of a MICE strategy such as branding and offering

subventions, and fostering industry collaboration between associations with members of MACEOS and the travel trade, event planners, transportation and equipment suppliers, venue providers and restaurant operators in Kuala Lumpur.

So as not to overlap with Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), the MICE desk will be limited to providing on-ground support to MyCEB's bids for business events to Kuala Lumpur.

Noraza elaborated: "The idea is to bring people together three or four

times a year to update all parties on what is happening in the city and to build a closer working relationship so everyone knows what's happening."

The 10-year Kuala Lumpur Master Plan was launched early this year, a roadmap towards achieving the city's ambitious targets of nearly doubling tourist arrivals to 16 million between 2015 and 2025. It also aims to increase average length of stay from 3.1 nights to 5.5 nights, and raise average spend per day from RM682 (US\$183.90) to RM900.



Noraza: formed to support KL's bids

China and India chapters drive SITE's Asia reboot

SITE will be supporting Asian chapters with "a strong incentive travel training and certification curriculum to capitalise on fresh opportunities to build a strong Asian community", according to Kevin Hinton, chief excellence officer.

With India hosting SITE's Global Conference 2015 and Rajeev Kohli, joint managing director of India's Creative Travel, assuming the 2016 SITE presidency, Hinton said the developments are providing the opportunity to further build a strong Asian community.

He also reported that SITE China Chapter is experiencing a strong resurgence with a new board of directors who are bringing a lot of new energy, ideas, members, and value to the Chinese incentive market.

"Our strategy is to support these local efforts with a strong incentive travel training and certification curriculum. We see a strong inbound and outbound market for China and are here to support the sustained growth of both," Hinton added.

"We have had a chapter in Singapore and are keen to build a strong local community there as part of our regional Asian strategy, which will focus on education, certification events and tradeshows."

Alicia Yao Hong, SITE China Chapter vice president, said the new board comprises MICE industry professionals who are young, international-minded, fully aware of SITE's core, and devoted to the chapter's development.

The chapter's objective in 2015 is to grow membership.

Yao, who is also a SITE International board member and general manager of IME Consulting, pointed out: "It is important to educate the market that incentives deliver business results. It is not a luxury and it is not corruption."

"It is a global modern enterprise management tool." –

Caroline Boey



Yao: incentive travel is not corruption



Hyatt to make its debut in Okinawa this year

Hyatt Hotels Corporation will open its first Hyatt-branded hotel on Okinawa later this year through a franchise agreement with PHR Okinawa Hotel Management, a subsidiary of Ken Corporation.

Hyatt Regency Naha, Okinawa will feature 294 guestrooms, four F&B outlets, meeting spaces, a fitness centre, and an outdoor swimming pool. Guests can enjoy the convenience of being within walking distance to Kokusai-dori, the city's main tourism and entertainment district. Naha International Airport is less than three miles away.

Ratnesh Verma, senior vice president, real estate and development, Asia Pacific, Hyatt, said in a press statement: "The Hyatt Regency brand is designed to keep people connected and energised, and we feel this hotel will be a perfect fit for the city of Okinawa and travellers."

He added: "Japan continues to see a rise in inbound tourism, and we look forward to welcoming guests to Hyatt Regency Naha, Okinawa."

CEMS returns to KL with new office, shows

By Hannah Koh

Established regional organiser CEMS revived its Kuala Lumpur operations in October last year, returning to a market it had quit after almost 30 years of absence.

Country manager Hellen Woon has been appointed to oversee operations in Kuala Lumpur.

Speaking to *TTGmice*, CEMS' group managing director, Edward Liu, explained CEMS' decision to regain its position in Malaysia.

"First of all, Malaysia is our closest neighbour and it would be easier for us to manage things out of Singapore. Secondly, we had the experience of operating an office in Kuala Lumpur, during the 1983-1985 period. We ceased operations in Malaysia during the recession at that time. Thirdly, we have an event, Café Malaysia, ready to be launched in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

Café Malaysia is an example of an event that answers the needs and demands of the Malaysian economy, which forms the mission of CEMS' Malaysia office.

The exhibition will be held at the MA-TRADE Exhibition Centre from May 7-9.

"We also organised Glasstech Asia in KLCC two years ago, and the event was highly successful. We are likely to repeat the event in the near future," he told this magazine.



Liu: aiming to regain position in Malaysia

The company also believes that Malaysia's MICE industry is on the ascent, "in tandem with the steady economic expansion in the country", Liu remarked.

"With the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of this year, we believe that more Chinese and foreign organisers and exhibitors are keen to hold exhibitions in Malaysia to take advantage of this growing MICE industry in the country," he pointed out.

"In the past few years, foreign organisers such as ITE Group from the UK and Sphere Exhibits from Singapore have entered the market and acquired some local organising companies."

P&O Cruises sails towards meetings



Cruise operator P&O Cruises is aiming to boost its corporate bookings by almost three-fold with the launch of a conferences division.

P&O Cruises director of sales, Ryan Taibel, said the move to set up a dedicated conference team comes as it prepares to expand its fleet from three to five ships, with the addition of *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden* in November this year.

The cruise line saw a surge in meeting bookings in 2015, particularly from the retail and pharmaceutical sectors and associations, he said.

While bookings to date from corporates stand at 4,000, Taibel said P&O is targeting 12,000 meeting delegates in

2016, with meetings of 100-200 delegates as its prime target.

Forty per cent of the overall ship itineraries offer short breaks of two to five nights, he shared, adding: "This shows that we are serious about having meetings or incentives on board our ships because we know that duration is one of the key considerations for this group of people."

"The current trend in MICE is that incentive groups will reward their top achievers with seven-night cruises, but generally for conferencing on cruises, meeting planners go for three to four nights."

Taibel said the expanded fleet would enable P&O to offer cruises from Australian ports as well as regional ones like Singapore and Auckland.

Highlighting that cruises are more affordable than land tours, Taibel said a price comparison between a three-night meeting on land including all group extras would cost an estimated minimum of A\$1,059 (US\$822) per delegate compared with A\$906 for a cruise. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

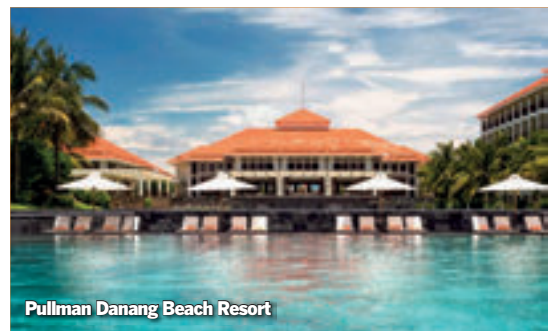
{ In brief }

MEA births new tradeshow

Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) will debut a new events tradeshow in Sydney this August, aimed at showcasing the city's event venues and suppliers to MICE buyers. Named The Event Show – Sydney, the tradeshow will feature an education programme and a Fresh Talent Zone, where new and innovative meeting suppliers can reach out to buyers.

Accor sponsors major golf game

Accor has put its support behind the inaugural Accor Vietnam World Masters Golf Championship in Danang from September 6-12, 2015, an event that has in the past 20 years been hosted in Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. As the main sponsor of the golf tournament, Pullman Danang Beach Resort will host all tournament functions and dinners. Pullman Danang Beach Resort, along with Novotel Danang Premier Han River, will be offered as accommodation options to all participants.



Singex, Makuhari Messe to share knowledge

SingEx, the management company of Singapore EXPO Convention and Exhibition Centre, has signed an MOU with Makuhari Messe in Chiba city, Japan, which will see both sharing best practices in venue management and operations, and exploring trade events that could be held in their respective venues. The partnership will enable the venues to leverage on each other's networks to attract shows, exhibitors and trade visitors, creating a wider reach for mutual benefit.

{ 2015 Calendar }

May 4-7

Arabian Travel Market,
Dubai, UAE

May 19-21

IMEX
Frankfurt,
Germany

June 9-11

IBTM America
Chicago, Illinois,
the US

June 10-11

CINZ Meetings
Auckland,
New Zealand

SingaPlural turns old police station into an art paradise

SINGAPORE The need for a raw backdrop that would enhance the flavour of art installations and programmes brought the organisers of SingaPlural 2015, the anchor event of the Singapore Design Week, to the former Beach Road Police Station, a colonial bungalow that dates back to 1931.

Speaking to *TTGmice* at the end of the week-long art showcase in March, Mark Yong, chairman of SingaPlural, said “a lot of hard work” went into finding the venue.

Yong, who is also vice president of the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), the organiser of SingaPlural, said: “Singapore is very land-scarce. We looked at 15 spaces before we set our hearts on this venue. We wanted the venue to be the backdrop so it had to be a raw canvas, only then can the installations really shine and the designers be inspired. Convention spaces and shop-



ping malls can be too pretty, and sometimes installations can lose their flavour.”

But the old police station came with operational challenges. “Being a building that was left vacant for 2.5 years,

its serviceability and usability were our biggest obstacles. We took over the building about three weeks before the festival, so we had only that much time to get the air conditioning, lighting and toilets working. We spent a lot of money to reinstate the building,” Yong shared, adding that budget was an issue for the not-for-profit association.

“A lot of our funds come from the government and companies participating in SingaPlural, such as Lamitak.

So it was good that many SFIC members came forth to help, even up till 03.00 on the day of the festival. They were there doing up the floorboards!”

SFIC also had to apply for safety approvals and insurance for the venue.

However, Yong does not regret the decision to use the old police station as the main venue, an arrangement that was different from past editions. Since the festival’s launch in 2012, installations and programmes were held in various locations across Singapore, such as Dhoby Ghaut Green, Robinsons department store and Park Mall shopping centre.

He said having SingaPlural 2015 in one location “gave us a more accurate audience number, as visitors had come specially to see the exhibits” and a higher level of engagement between visitors and designers. SingaPlural 2015 enjoyed a record-high attendance of 28,262 people.

“This year visitors stayed between one and four hours, depending on whether they took part in talks or workshops, or came purely to look at the installations and talk to the designers behind those works,” he said. — **Karen Yue**

Old world appeal wins OB/GYN association’s favour

MALAYSIA Fielding Kuching as the host destination in the bid for the 24th Asian & Oceanic Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AOCOG) in 2015 proved to be a good move by the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia.

While previous congresses were held in capital cities around the world, secondary Malaysian city Sarawak offered a different angle to the event and allowed it to stand out from competing bids from Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and India.

Ravi Chandran, congress



Chandran: stronger Middle Eastern attendance expected

president of the 24th AOCOG, said: “We chose to have it in Kuching because it has a state-of-the-art convention centre (Borneo Convention Centre) with a million year-old natural rainforest literally at our doorstep. It is also in Borneo, a name that conjures up images of jungles, head-hunters and mystique!”

To be held this June, the 24th AOCOG will bear the theme,

Old World Charm Meeting New Technology. Scientific content encompassing elements of advanced techniques and procedures will blend with opportunities to visit the rural communities and spend time in a traditional longhouse.

Commenting on a week-long fellowship programme, where young gynaecologists will visit the main public hospital in Kuching, health centres outside of the capital city, and spend two days partaking in community activities, Chandran said: “This programme will enable the Fellows to appreciate the difficulties faced by the local

specialists. It is hoped that this collaboration will spawn new avenues to improve the delivery of quality healthcare to the women of Sarawak.”

Where previous congresses had failed to attract delegates from the Middle East, partly due to food and cultural differences, the organisers of the 24th AOCOG are optimistic of improved attendance from the region because of the easy availability of Halal food, Muslim prayer rooms at the convention centre, and affordability of the destination.

Thus, a special symposium from West Asia has been planned, with members from the UAE, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Oman speaking on what Arab women want from obstetricians and gynaecologists. — **S Puvaneswary**

PEACE AT SHANGHAI

AN EVENT THAT ROARS

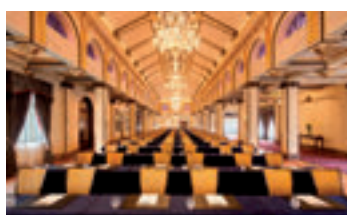
After a meticulous, three-year makeover, the historic **Fairmont Peace Hotel** has been transformed and modernized into an awe-inspiring beauty, enhancing its Art Deco heritage.



Sophisticated, cosmopolitan and eminently historical, the Fairmont Peace Hotel is once again rolling out the red carpet to guests who long to experience the glamour of Shanghai's Golden Age, at one of the city's most beloved landmarks.

The Peace Hotel was built in 1929, to serve as Asia's fulcrum of elite parties, grand balls and a business lair for the tycoons, diplomats and royalty. The same ethos pervades the solid halls and hallways of the hotel today: outstanding facilities and impeccable service, graced with elegance.

Fully optimized for global business needs, MICE planners are served by dedicated professionals to help them secure absolute success for every event hosted, ensuring they are the talk of town! Event planners demand style, flexibility, and value for money to put together events that relate and engage participants. Our stunning facilities allow personalization and a unique identity to make every event



memorable and special.

Backed by the iconic hotel's 270 luxurious guestrooms and suites, each an oasis of serenity and style that allows a guest to truly experience Shanghai's rich heritage and legendary lifestyle. Relive the age of elegance at the Fairmont Peace Hotel, Shanghai.



For MICE enquiries, please call + 86 21 6138 6910 or email jacqueline.he@fairmont.com

INSPIRING MEETING SPACES

The Rooftop – Shanghai's highest rooftop terrace on The Bund. At 1,000 sqm, it can accommodate up to 800 guests. For sit down banquets, 450 guests can be accommodated. The inspirational views of The Bund and Pudong make an awesome backdrop for any event.

The Peace Hall – Shanghai's most famous ballroom. Imagine holding a cocktail for 500 or banquet for 300 in this 540 sqm space, featuring the original sprung white maple dance floor, art-deco features, crystal chandeliers and a 6.5m ceiling. The rich and famous and many past heads of States graced this unique room.

Chun Shen – The 215 sqm space has been immaculately designed to complement the Art Deco style, showing a compelling view of the Bund.

Nine Heaven – With wrap-around views of Pudong and Huangpu River, this exceptional space was known as the "Banker's Club" in the 1990s.

Salon 1929, Salon 1956 and Salon 2010 – These multifunctional salons are designed for more intimate soirees, each named after a seminal year in the hotel's history: the founding of Cathay Hotel (precursor to the Peace Hotel); the renaming to Peace Hotel; and the opening of the revived Fairmont Peace Hotel. They are 30 sqm, 35 sqm and 90 sqm respectively.

MICE planners can also consider the Chinese restaurant **Dragon Phoenix** (capacity: 150 guests) or **Level 9 Terrace** with spectacular views (capacity: 30 guest) for their events.



Photo: i23RF.com

Stronger by association

Asian association leaders are now sprinting to professionalise the sector and stronger associations are a boost for Asia's MICE industry. **Raini Hamdi** analyses the development from Hong Kong, where ASAE held its first association management conference in Asia-Pacific

In respond to a beseeching question from a young association executive:

"What can we do to help advance association management as a career choice – how do we even begin to explain to people what it is that we do?", John Graham, president and CEO of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), replied wistfully, to a ripple of laughter from the audience: "My mom does not even know what it is that I do."

The Washington-based ASAE was founded in 1920 and today counts an impressive 22,000 members and 11,000 organisations in its fold. Imagine what the landscape is for the fledgling associations sector in Asia.

In Asia, association executives do not even know they are one, according to Octavio (Bobby) Peralta, secretary-general, Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific, based in Manila. When Peralta launched the Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives (PCAEE) in November 2013, he asked the 200 attendees from mostly national associations in the Philippines: "Who among you use the name 'association executive' as your profession?"

"Only one rose," Peralta told *TTGmice*.

"Afterwards, a few of them told me, Mr Peralta now I have a profession."

Fertile sector

Yet, Asia does have a fertile associations sector. In the Philippines, PCAEE's research finds about 5,000 registered associations, and thousands more if other civic societies and small groupings are counted. In China, as of June 2013, there are over 506,700 legally-registered 'social organisations', comprising traditional government-linked associations, modern independent organisations, commercially-driven ones, at national and provincial levels. In South Korea, there are more than 100,000 association executives, according to Hee Kon Hwang, president of the Korean Society of Association

Executives (KSAE), which was just formed on November 11, 2014. Of that massive number, only 50 individuals have joined KSAE to-date.

So far Asia has seen the light of only the PCAEE and KSAE – ironic that the very people who do association work do not themselves have a platform to forge a sense of belonging, advance their profession and learn what it takes to create strong, sustainable associations.

But it won't be long before there will be more societies of association executives across Asia and things are moving at a breakneck speed. Already, PCAEE and KSAE, along with counterparts in Australia, the Associations Forum and Australasian Society of Association Executives, signed a charter in Hong Kong during the inaugural ASAE Great Ideas! in Association Management Conference in Asia-Pacific last March to form an Asia-Pacific federation. And more association leaders from other Asian countries are looking at PCAEE and KSAE and are asking: "Why can't we have that too?"

Ajay Kakar, a periodontist who founded the BITEIN Dental Portal which now has a multi-tier membership fee structure, said he was talking to ASAE to create a chapter in India. "I've suggested forming a society of Indian association executives to three or four people from different industries and this is going to be my endeavour this year."

With rising economies, Asia's association leaders have gained experience and stature, bringing world congresses to their shores and being elected as presidents of international associations. Kakar, for example, is president-elect of the International Academy of Periodontology. And these leaders are passionate about giving back and making the fertile associations sector in their respective countries thrive.

PCAEE's Peralta is a good example. A mechanical engineer by training, he had to learn the hard – and long – way about association management.

"When I started as an association executive, I was clueless: how do I manage an association? So what I did first was to

be a member of ASAE, in 1990, when I was in Washington. I used a lot of their books but I had to self-learn. That's why I formed PCAAE, as a give-back. For me it was a long process, but if you have training, if you share knowledge with others, it is easier," he said.

Peralta's dreams for PCAAE reflect the current poor standing of the sector in Asia. In the Philippines, there is a commission that regulates all professions – doctors, real estate workers, etc – but not association executives, he said. Certification programmes are non-existent. "In the States, if you are a Certified Association Executive (CAE), you get 30

it wants them to be more independent, transparent and to seek finances themselves," he said.

China is veering towards getting associations to be more self-supporting.

John Peacock, general manager of Associations Forum, Australia, which has been providing consultancy to Asian associations, observed: "Associations in Asia need to seek more professional advice, but there is a tendency for them not to spend money on hiring professional lawyers, consultants, etc. In our experience, the volunteer on a board or council committee of an association often does not ask,

don't realise what they don't know."

This is why, Peacock added, the Hong Kong charter to form the Federation of Association Organisations is not an idea whose time has come but one that "is long overdue, done by committed individuals such as Bobby (Peralta) and Glynn (Cho)".

"People are generally inspired by ASAE and see that if ASAE can have a vibrant sector, we should try and have our own body to suit our own circumstances.

"Running an association can be a lonely job – you need a platform where people meet each other and talk about com-

ments, among others," said Peralta.

"We are the bridge between the private and the public sector," said KSAE's Hwang.

ASAE has a dedicated brand, *The Power of A – Stronger by association*, and encourages all associations and nonprofits in the US to tap into its campaign materials to broadcast how they help build a stronger nation and the world.

One area why associations matters is of course meetings – almost every association holds meetings, conventions, congresses – some large, some small – and the value of meetings to a society is not just its direct revenue impact and multiplier effect, but the intellectual content that it generates.

This is why convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) such as Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) and convention centres in Asia such as the Philippine International Convention Centre have jumped into action to help bring association executives in their countries together.

ASAE meanwhile is hesitant to form chapters in Asia-Pacific currently, although it has set up an office in South Korea and in China. Greta Kotler, ASAE's chief global development officer, said its goal for the region is not membership drive, but "engagement and relationship" with Asia-Pacific partners.

"They are asking for talent and so we help them to develop talent in association management," said Kotler.

"Membership may be something in the future. We don't have the products and services for Asian associations, for example, and we're so far away. We're so pleased this first ASAE Great Ideas! conference in Asia-Pacific is off to a good start, with more than 170 attendees, and we have preliminary plans to return to Hong Kong and eventually to rotate the conference in the region," she added.

Without question, many Asian associations and CVBs would say 'What a great idea!' to that.



"In the States, if you are a Certified Association Executive (CAE), you get 30 per cent more pay – this is a big motivation for association executives to professionalise themselves"

Octavio Peralta

Secretary-general, Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific

per cent more pay – this is a big motivation for association executives to professionalise themselves," Peralta said.

Good governance

At the heart of it all is the fact many associations in Asia are not properly run and governed. "Hardly an association in India has a CEO," said Kakar. "Ninety-nine per cent are run by volunteers."

But now, factors such as government deregulation and the rise of a new generation which demands more ROI (return on investment) than ASI (value on investment), Asian associations – like their counterparts in the Western world – are slowly recognising that the old ways won't work.

In South Korea, for example, associations 10 years ago were largely controlled and financed by the government, according to KSAE secretary-general, Glynn Cho. "But with the government having to look at other issues such as healthcare and welfare, although there is still support for associations,

what is my legal responsibility and liability? Am I going to get sued? That's a big thing.

"Associations in Asia also need to start paying for managers, and let the managers have a budget and employ people."

He added: "The models of associations are generally the same everywhere but, excluding China (which is an association world of its own), I respectfully venture to say the Asia-Pacific democracies have to catch up. If you look at the strong Western associations, they have good governance, good management and charge what they are worth in terms of fees. One of the problems (with Asian associations) is they don't charge enough and the board needs to appoint a CEO who is in charge of the management and strategic plan."

Asked why many associations in Asia are in this state, Peacock said, "To a degree, there aren't enough role models of good, well-run associations for them to emulate. They

mon issues," Peacock said.

Peralta hoped the Hong Kong charter would spawn the birth of more societies of association executives in Asia, which would advance the cause for the Asia-Pacific federation. The meeting that witnessed the signing also saw an ASAE representative and an association leader from Singapore and India. There was even talk of eventually forming a global federation, which could in turn to see the materialisation of other big dreams such as a world congress of association executives.

The Power of A

But why do associations matter? This too is a story that has not been properly told, according to association leaders interviewed.

"You know about the public sector and the private sector, but there is a third sector, and that's the associations sector which also contributes a lot to a country – education, development, providing recommendations and advice to govern-



Jeunesse Expo5, Annual World Conference 2014



With only six weeks to put together a mega conference, official event contractor MCI has to mobilise two offices to get things moving fast.

By **Prudence Lui**

Event

Jeunesse Expo5,
Annual World Conference 2014

Organiser

MCI

Venue

CotaiArena, The Venetian Macao

Date

September 26-28, 2014

Number of participants

10,000 ticketed delegates,
1,500+ visitors and 100 VIPs

Challenges

MCI had only six weeks to deliver the conference; careful crowd control was needed as the event was sold out to more than 12,000 people

By the time global event specialist MCI was appointed official contractor for the Jeunesse Expo5, Annual World Conference 2014, there were only six weeks left to the big day.

To ensure a timely delivery of the three-day event in Macau, MCI's Hong Kong and Macau offices joined hands in event planning and execution.

The programme comprised a pre-opening night for 100 VIPs who attended a private dinner followed by a viewing of The House of Dancing Water show in City of Dreams, presentations, product briefs and launches, ceremonies that recognised top performing distributors, and entertainment.

According to MCI Group Hong Kong's managing director, Peter Kinnane, the event drew "phenomenal" interest from the Jeunesse network, selling out to more than 12,000 people daily.

To manage the crowds, MCI worked with the client to hold the conference at The Venetian Macao and to accommodate delegates at the nearby Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central and Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central.

"It was spectacular that Macau is able to hold the event in one location (on Cotai Strip) where all guests are within walking distance of the event venue. No other places in the world could allow such an arrangement with such ease, and this convenience will become more advantageous as Cotai Strip continues to expand," said Kinnane.

The high human traffic meant that

crowd controls were needed. MCI set up queue controls and security measures at two registration areas – one at The Venetian Macao and the other at Sands Cotai Central.

As MCI was required by law to inform the Macau government of the number of people inside the CotaiArena at any one time, MCI created a daily event ticket with a seat allocation, and put in place an entry and exit scanning system at the doors.

"As the CotaiArena had capacity for just over 10,000, an overflow room had to be created almost overnight," Kinnane added.

By allocating seats, MCI was able to group attendees by their home countries, which in turn created a vibrant atmosphere with national flags and colours.

The diverse background of attendees also called for a flexible script that was engaging. MCI formed technical and translation teams with more than 35 people to respond to last minute changes. To translate the script from English to six other languages, MCI leveraged the Jeunesse QR system and barcoded each transporter so it could be linked to a delegate. Disposable rubber ear tips on headphones expedited the circulation of audio devices.

Throughout the event, delegates could view and purchase the range of Jeunesse products. Sales was strong.

The event ended with Scott Lewis, Chief Visionary Officer of Jeunesse Global, noting the company's network of distributors were energised.

Philips India Incentive Travel Event 2015

A gutsy DMC organises an event with a large group size it never handled before and achieves success from sound planning and issue management skills. By **Feizal Samath**



When Colombo-based Walkers Tours received the call to handle a group of 1,600 visitors from India for a three-day event, the DMC did not hesitate to accept the task although at that point the largest event it had ever organised was for an 800-pax group.

“We were confident of handling a larger group,” recalled Vasantha Leelananda, the DMC’s managing director and parent company John Keells Holdings’

(JKH) executive vice president.

And so the group of Phillips India employees became the largest-ever group travel to Sri Lanka, with Walkers Tours pulling out all the stops on its resources.

The event was to comprise meetings and an awards ceremony. Phillips was looking at a location within a few hours’ flying time in or around India, so it sent Indian event planner Enthuse Answers to Colombo for a recce. The latter was impressed by the facilities and confidence Walkers Tours, with its years of experience, exhibited for handling the logistics. It was then decided that the Sri Lanka Exhibition and Convention Centre would be the event venue.

As a local planner, Walkers Tours provided an experienced events team, dozens of luxury transport buses and two of the biggest hotels in the capital owned by JKH, which also runs the country’s largest hotel chain.

The DMC gathered about 35 staff members, divided them into four teams to take care of visa applications, flights, airport transfers, accommodation, arrangements with the convention centre, and other logistics. More than 800 rooms were booked at the Cinnamon Grand, Cinnamon Lakeside (both owned by JKH), Hotel Galadari, Hilton Colombo and The Kingsbury for three nights.

Charters by SriLankan Airlines were arranged with some flights upgraded to wide-bodied aircraft. The flights ranged from one (Chennai to Colombo) to three

hours (New Delhi to Colombo). About 45 buses were deployed to ferry the visitors from the airport and back and forth travel within the city.

The main events were held at the convention centre, where a temporary kitchen was set up by Cinnamon Lakeside in addition to the hotel’s main kitchen, which supplied the bulk of the hot meals less than 250m away. All five hotels were all fewer than 10 minutes away.

Asked if the organising team encountered problems, Leelananda said: “One of the key challenges was bringing in all the guests within 24 hours and flying them out within 24 hours.”

Another challenge presented itself later when assembling the group in the hotel lobby at the same time for room allotment, made complicated by last-minute name changes in the original room-sharing list. For example, there were several cases of a participant inviting a friend to share his room, thus leaving the other guest pre-assigned to share the same room with no room to check into. Walkers Tours had to sort out the issue sensitively and re-assigned rooms to affected guests.

“This exercise also demonstrated the need for each of the participating hotels to provide a dedicated inhouse team.

“Phillips’ management was extremely impressed by the organisation of the event as well as Colombo’s beauty, cleanliness and infrastructure. The event was in fact a good boost to MICE tourism in Sri Lanka,” Leelananda added.

Event

Phillips India incentive travel event 2015

Local planner

Walkers Tours

Date

January 16-19, 2015

Venue

Sri Lanka Exhibition and Convention Centre, Colombo

No. of participants

Over 1,600 Phillips workers from New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai

Challenges

Ferrying the massive number of participants from four locations in India to Sri Lanka all in a day, coordinating flights, hotel stays and room sharing as scheduled without any hiccups

38th CID-UNESCO World Dance Congress

Event leaves Europe for the first time and pirouettes into Japan's Urayasu City



CID-UNESCO, founded in 1973, is an organisation for different styles of dance from all over the world. It is a non-governmental organisation within UNESCO and is based in Paris.

There are 4,000 members and 600 member organisations from 155 countries. Members include students, teachers, choreographers and dancers. The Dance Congress is held to promote peace regardless of nationality, age, sex, or occupation.

A spokesman from the Chiba Convention Bureau and International Center (CCB-IC) said Urayasu City was designated an International Meeting Tourism City in 2010, and the Mayor of Urayasu City met CID-UNESCO staff in 2011 in Greece during Japan National Tourism Organization's annual Meet Japan programme.

From that point on CCB-IC, Urayasu City and JNTO worked together to convince organisers that Urayasu City would be the best destination for the 2014 dance congress, based on its convenient access to two international airports, the superb facilities of the Sheraton Grande Tokyo Bay Hotel, and the area's abundance of accommodation and amenities aimed at foreign travellers.

Working together, Team Chiba won the bid for the 38th CID-UNESCO World Dance Congress and it became the first congress to be awarded a convention subsidy, which had just been created in 2011, from Chiba Prefecture.

In Chiba Prefecture subsidies from the prefectural government, municipal governments, and CCB-IC are available.

In addition, the 38th CID-UNESCO

World Dance Congress was awarded JNTO's International Congress Bid Contribution Award in recognition of it being the first time the event was being held outside Europe, and the opportunity to bring the meeting to Japan, which was created through JNTO's Meet Japan programme. The award, the spokesman added, is meant to raise awareness of international conferences to the public.

The event was promoted locally for two years and was supported by local stakeholders from the bidding process.

The Sheraton Grande Tokyo Bay Hotel provided the perfect setting. Located within the Tokyo Disney Resort in Urayasu City, just 15 minutes away from Tokyo Station by train and featuring a spectacular view of Tokyo Bay, the hotel is an excellent destination for any business event.

The main ballroom, The Club Fuji, one of the largest meeting rooms in Japan, which was renovated in September 2014, was used at the main space.

The Chief of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Minister's Secretariat Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Division and the Mayor of Urayasu City gave welcome speeches at the opening ceremony. World famous ballerina Yoshida Miyako, goodwill ambassador and actress Daichi Mao, PR and goodwill ambassador Dave Spector and his wife Kyoko also attended.

"I was touched by the chance to interact with Japanese culture." and "The last couple of days were like a dream." were some of the comments made by delegates at the congress.

Event

38th CID-UNESCO World Dance Congress
2014

Organiser

CID-UNESCO, the official umbrella organisation for all forms of dance in the world.

Venue

Sheraton Grande Tokyo Bay Hotel, Urayasu City, Chiba Prefecture

Date

October 23-27

No. of participants

600 people, including 140 from 25 overseas countries

Objectives

To showcase Urayasu City which was designated an International Tourism Meeting City by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) in 2010

Challenges

To convince CID-UNESCO to hold its first event outside Europe and that Urayasu City was the right host city



Lee Ng



Patricia Beaudoux



Clive Edwards



Hermann Wegmuller

Australia

Tourism Australia has welcomed **Andrew Hogg** as the new regional general manager – Greater China. Hogg joins the tourism bureau from Qantas Airways, where he was general manager – China.

China

Linly Heng has been appointed director of sales & marketing of **Le Royal Meridien Shanghai** and area director of sales & marketing East China, **Starwood Hotels & Resorts**. She was last director of sales and marketing at Sheraton Sanya Resort.

Raffles Beijing has announced two key appointments with **Janet M Chan** as director of sales & marketing, and **Erin Proud** as director of F&B. In Proud's new role, she will oversee three signature dining venues. Prior to joining the hotel, Chan was director of sales & marketing at Vomo Resort Fiji. This is her second role with Raffles following her work with Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor.

The Ritz-Carlton, Beijing has promoted **Tarik Temucin** to general manager from his former position as hotel manager.

Indonesia

Ayana Resort and Spa Bali has promoted **Clive Edwards** to general manager, from

his previous role as interim general manager of Ayana and Rimba.

Malaysia

Lee Ng has joined **Silka Cheras Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia** as general manager. Prior to this, Ng was the complex director of sales & marketing at The Royal Begonia, Sanya. He has also worked with Shangri-La Singapore, Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur and The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur.

Singapore

Lindy Wee is now chief executive of **Singapore Exhibition Services**, replacing Stephen Tan who has stepped down from his role at the company. Wee rose to this position from her former role as director of PR and conferences.

InterContinental Singapore has promoted **Rex Loh** to the position of area director of sales & marketing. Loh will manage six hotels across four brands in the destination. He joined the company as director of sales & marketing in December 2013, bringing with him over 16 years of valuable experience helping sales, marketing and revenue functions in the hospitality industry.

Marina Bay Sands has appointed **Patricia Beaudoux** its new director of international sales – Asia. She is responsible for establishing

and managing key meetings and events accounts across North America tradeshows, international associations and multinational corporations. She reports to Mike Lee, vice president of sales at Marina Bay Sands.

Thailand

Akira Park has been named general manager of **Mantra Samui Resort**. Park spent most of his hospitality career with Hyatt Hotels, starting in the US before moving to South Korea. His most recent post was in China where he was involved in opening a hotel in Qingdao.

Hermann Wegmueller has been made the new CEO at **Meeting Point Asia** with headquarters in Bangkok. He takes over from Jan Respen, who has left the Thai destination management company for private reasons. Wegmueller joins the company from Go Vacation Thailand, where he was executive director product & contracting.

Montara Hospitality Group has announced the return of **Anthony Lark** as managing director and general manager of Trisara resort in Phuket. He joined Trisara in 2000 and has over 25 years of experience leading luxury hotel groups in the region.

Pullman Bangkok Hotel G has named **Tony Chisholm** as its new general manager. The New Zealander has over 20 years of experience working in the hospitality industry at



Anthony Lark



Stanley Chang

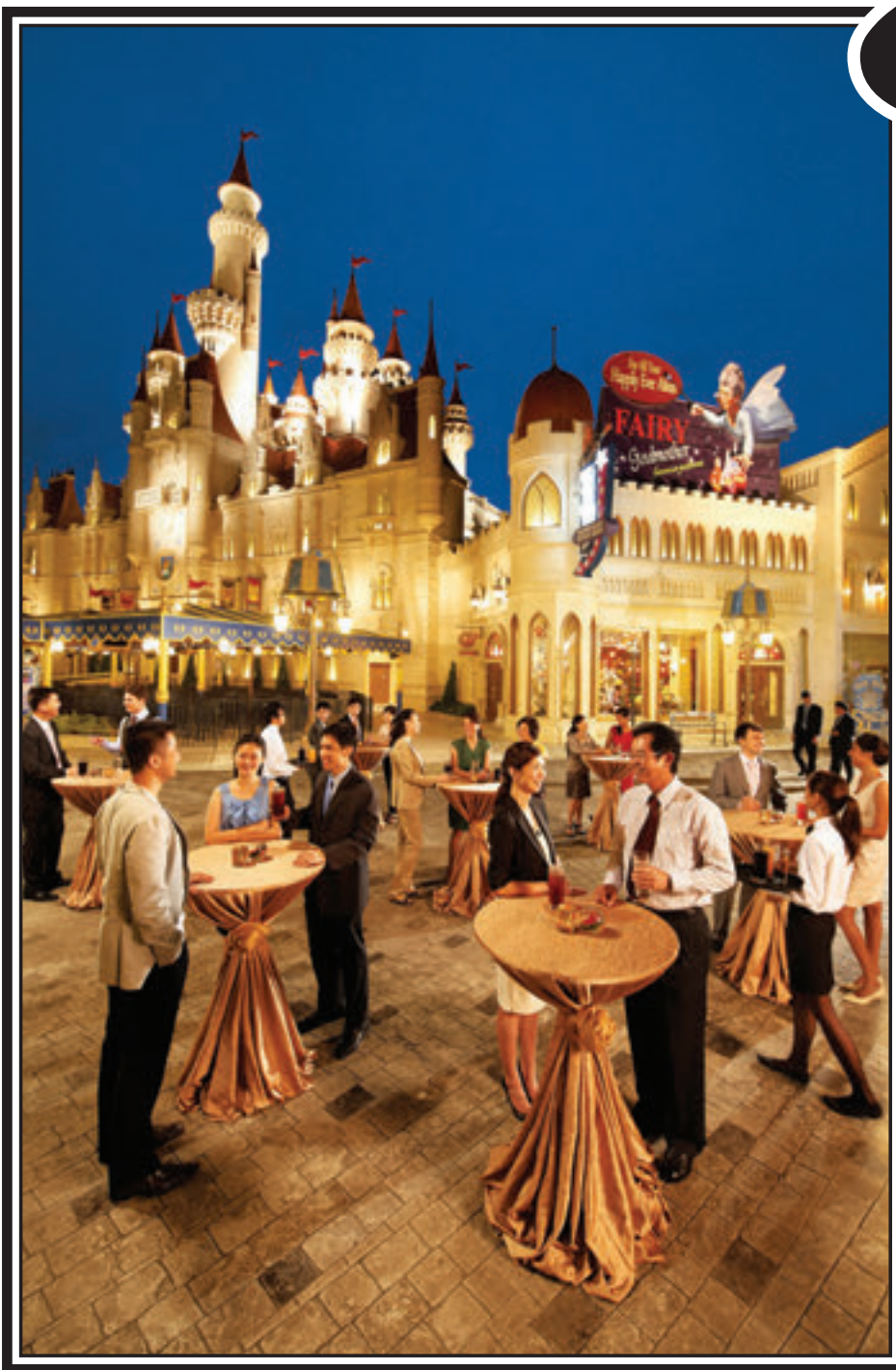
a senior management level across Asia-Pacific. Prior to this appointment, he led the preopening team at Sofitel So Singapore.

Stanley Chang has been appointed food and beverage manager at **Six Senses Samui**. Chang started his hospitality career at The Mirage, Las Vegas as assistant restaurant manager in 2006, shortly after his graduation from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Since then he has worked at renowned luxury resorts including One & Only Reethi Rah and Taj Exotica Resort and Spa in the Maldives.

Large

unique venues in Asia

End your search for special venues that can accommodate large gatherings. *TTGmice* reporters in the region put on their searchlights and come up with this list of large unique venues that will enable you to show off the destination and your hospitality in style





Universal Studios Singapore's themed areas Far Far Away (opposite) and Ancient Egypt (top); Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (below)



Singapore

Name of venue

Universal Studios Singapore

Seating capacity

Up to 3,500 pax

Background

The theme park opened in March 2010 and is one of the key attractions at Resorts World Sentosa.

Why it's unique

This is South-east Asia's first and only Universal Studios theme park. Event organisers have a wide variety of venues to choose from.

Some of the more popular venues include New York Street, where companies can conduct an evening function at a fully covered space that uses the streetscape of 1950s and 1960s nostalgic New York as backdrop and seats 1,500 pax banquet-style.

The WaterWorld Stunt Show Amphitheatre seats 3,500 pax and is suitable for welcome event, while the special Scavenger Hunt programme has been popular as a company team-building activity.

Who's been there

Chung Shan Association's opening ceremony, 2014; Hewlett Packard



Ways to use the venue

The WaterWorld Stunt Show Amphitheatre is ideal as a gathering point for large groups. From there, participants can access a park buy-out encompassing different rides, shows and attractions tailored to the organiser's needs and budgets. Not only can rides, shows and attractions be chosen, a selection of characters is also available for meet-and-greet events. Special requests ranging from giant LED screens to stage set-ups and performances can also be accommodated by in-house production and technical teams.

Smaller groups preferring a more cosy setting can gather at a certain zone, such as New York Street or New York Harbour with street buffet or butler-style canapés as food options.

The park has also hosted welcome events and opening ceremonies.

– *Paige Lee Pei Qi*



Hong Kong

Name of venue

Kai Tak Cruise Terminal

Seating capacity

Up to 3,000 pax, seated, in each of four indoor venues; 960 pax in an additional on-site banquet facility

Background

The cruise terminal is operated by World-wide Cruise Terminals. It first received cruise ships and held events in 2013, and its construction was fully completed in 2014. Apart from an on-site production kitchen, other F&B venues include a Chinese dim sum restaurant, Hong Kong-style

café, western cafe and champagne bar. Events at the Terminal have featured both live and DJ musical performances.

There are 40 weather-protected coach parking bays, 30 lay-bys as well as an indoor parking lot. Valet parking is available. The terminal can also provide a large ferry for over 500 pax to/from Hong Kong Island or elsewhere. Public transportation consists of frequent minibuses to/from Kowloon Bay MTR daily, and weekend/holiday double-decker buses.

Why it's unique

Located on the runway of the former Kai Tak Airport, the terminal offers 360-degree views of Victoria Harbour. Its unique architecture helps set the stage for any event. Bringing guests to the cruise terminal by ferry will provide them with an unforgettable experience.

Who's been there

Cruise Shipping Asia Pacific's reception, 2014; WorldSkills Hong Kong Skills Connect, 2014

Ways to use the venue

The venue is suitable for large gatherings with its substantial F&B options. While in-house catering is available, external catering is also allowed. The terminal can be used for pre- and post-events in conjunction with either a local harbour or high-sea cruise. It is possible to charter a ship for a short incentive cruise departing after a presentation or meeting in the terminal.

Name of venue

sky100 Events

Seating capacity

50-1,000 pax

Background

Developed by Sun Hung Kai Properties, this adaptable venue is ideal for both small intimate gatherings and large corporate events. It has hosted corporate events since 2012, although the brand, sky100 Events, was established in 2014.

Why it's unique

Located on the 100th floor within the International Commerce Centre in West Kowloon, the venue is close to first-class shopping, dining, luxurious accommodation and entertainment venues, with convenient transportation access like the MTR and Airport Express. Apart from being the city's highest venue with a 360-degree view of Hong Kong, its huge space boasts a high ceiling and is pillarless. Flexible canvas dividers allow multiple zoning for a wide range of activi-

ties happening at the same time. Clients are also provided with a wide variety of catering options from the venue's various partners, such as the Ritz Carlton.

Who's been there

The 35th Asian Racing Conference's cocktail reception; Sony's multi-zoning event including a product launch, game experience and cocktail party; Giorgio Armani's Eccentrico Exhibition and corporate gala dinner

Ways to use the venue

The venue's unobstructed space can be divided into four different zones, such as a product display area in the north, cocktail party in the east, press conference in the west and gala dinner in the south. It awes delegates with the use of digital devices to create an amazing journey from the lobby all the way up to the deck on the 100th floor. The deck is perfect for incentive groups to enjoy stunning 360-degree views of the city and its world-renowned Victoria Harbour. Cocktail events can also be held up here.

– Prudence Lui



Vietnam

Name of venue

Vinpearl Resort Phu Quoc

Seating capacity

Up to 1,500 pax from six meeting venues; 700 pax at the biggest ballroom

Background

Opened in November 2014, the resort is operated by Vinpearl, one of Vietnam's largest hospitality companies with properties in Nha Trang and Danang. It is located on Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand, a 45-minute flight from Ho Chi Minh City or 2.5-hour speedboat transfer from Rach Gia.

The integrated resort has 750 rooms for up to 2,000 pax, from the 46m² entry-level Deluxe rooms to the 144 opulent 615m² Ocean View Villas. There are six F&B outlets, a spa, swimming pool, fitness centre, 27-hole golf course, on-site amusement park featuring a water park, underwater world and shopping street, as well as recreational activities ranging from trekking in the national park to squid fishing to visits to fish sauce factories on the island.

Why it's unique

The newest addition to Phu Quoc's fledgling tourism and hospitality scene, the resort is also the largest five-star hotel on the island.

Since March 10, 2014, Phu Quoc Island is the only destination in Vietnam that foreigners can visit for up to 30 days without a visa, a move likely to reduce hassles for big association groups with international delegates.

Air access to this up-and-coming destination is also improving, which saw the launch of direct flights from Singapore and Siem Reap by Vietnam Airlines in 4Q14. Furthermore, the Vietnamese government has announced that a new international cruise terminal will be built at the southern end of Phu



Vinpearl Resort Phu Quoc golf course

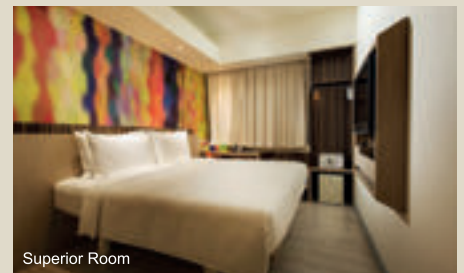
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Quoc Island, potentially linking the destination to the regional cruise circuit, and paving for corporate incentives.

Who's been there

Pepsi (400 pax); Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade (500 pax)

Ways to use the venue

Big meetings can make use of the 870m² Sunrise Ballroom, which can fit up to 700 pax theatre-style, or the 210m² Grand Studio for up to 150 pax, in addition to a 750m² pre-function area. As well, there are five 40-70m² meeting rooms, with capacity for 20-40 pax.

The resort also offers a diverse range of indoor and outdoor activities for guests, whether it's parasailing, jet skiing, sailing or kayaking. It has its own private beach and a private island less than two kilometres from the coast, ideal for incentive or teambuilding events. Discovery experiences to other parts of the island like trekking in the nearby national park, visiting a local pepper farm or traditional fish sauce factory are all possible.

– *Xinyi Liang-Pholsena*



South Korea

Name of venue

Busan Cinema Center

Seating capacity

Up to 4,000 pax in the biggest theatre

Background

Opened on September 29, 2011, the Busan Cinema Center is owned by Busan Metropolitan City and run by the centre itself. It comprises three buildings.

The outdoor BIFF Theatre, where the Busan International Film Festival's Opening and Closing ceremonies are held, has 4,000 seats and can stage film screenings, shows and other events.

Cinemountain houses the 841-seat Haneulyeon Theatre that occupies the building's first to fifth floors, while the seventh to eighth floor is home to Cinema I with 413 seats, Cinema II with 212, and Cinematheque with 212.

Double Cone offers a café, visitor centre and information centre on the first floor, while the rest of the building is occupied by restaurants and bars.

Why it's unique

The centre plays host to the prestigious Busan International Film Festival every October, where the brightest stars of international cinema gather to pay homage to the industry. Planners can choose from the range of theatres, cinemas and restaurants for their events.

Who's been there

15th Busan Film Critics Association Awards ceremony, 2014

Ways to use the venue

The BIFF Theatre is equipped with technology that allows live, simultaneous telecast to the Haneulyeon Theatre and three other cinemas. Meetings with more than 4,000 delegates can ensure that the



From left: Busan Cinema Center; Tycoon, Yokohama

same content is broadcast to all members for congresses. The availability of screens and stages make it perfect for film screenings and performances to entertain incentive winners. – *Hannah Koh*



Japan

Name of venue

Tycoon

Seating capacity

300 pax seated; 500 pax for standing buffet

Background

This seafood restaurant opened in July 1989 and is operated by Yokohama Skhole Co. It specialises in Oriental cuisine.

Why it's unique

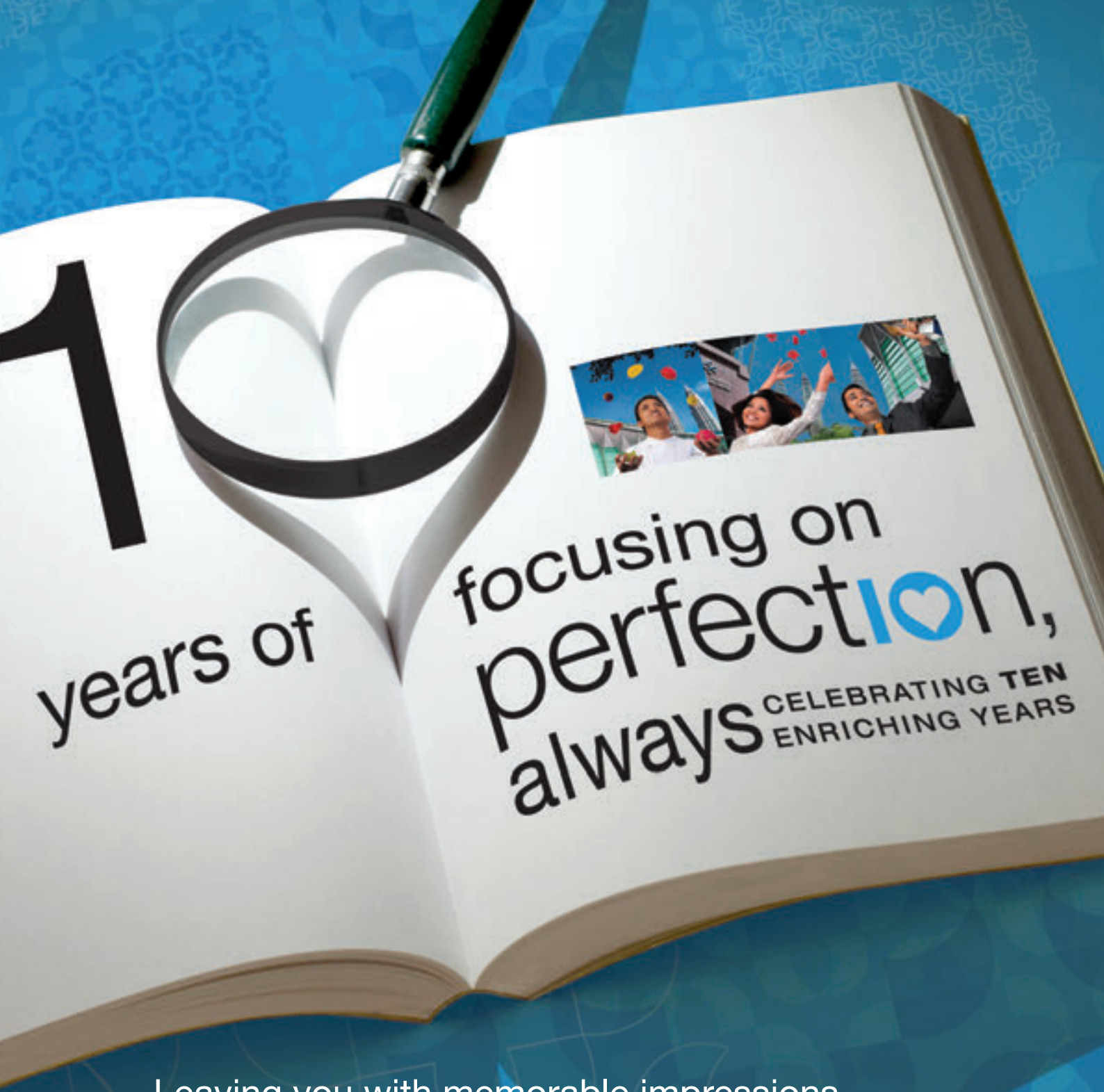
The building was converted from a warehouse. It features an outdoor terrace where BBQ events can be held in summer. It also has its own pier attached to the restaurant, so guests can enjoy cruising the port of Yokohama.

Who's been there

4th World Union of Wound Healing Societies, 2012

Ways to use the venue

On top of easy access to the restaurant, guests can enjoy a 20-minute cruise ride from the pier just next to the Pacifico Yokohama Convention Center. – *Kathy Neo*



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Philippines

Name of venue

The Forum

Seating capacity

Up to 1,000 pax

Background

Opened end-2014, The Forum is a 2,000m² MICE venue in the Sky Tower of Solaire Resort and Casino (in Entertainment City, Manila), the flagship property of Philippine-listed firm Bloomberry Resorts Corp. It comprises a column-free ballroom for 1,000 pax (table seating), flexible pre-function area, eight meeting rooms and two boardrooms.

Sky Tower also boasts 312 all-suite hotel tower; 1,760-seat Lyric Theater for concerts and other performances; 2,500m² luxurious spa and beauty salon; additional VIP gaming areas; and two gaily bedecked restaurants, Waterside Restobar serving Mediterranean and Latin American fares and Oasis Garden Cafe overlooking two waterfalls.

Why it's unique

The venue is brand new, plush and opulent, with luxury at all corners, including quality table linens, crystals, cutlery and lots of flowers. Novelties include gold-plated ceiling accents, giant chandeliers, art displays and a quirky design.

Solaire's 11 restaurants are fast gaining popularity for their wide array of gastronomic delights, including a chocolate

dessert topped by 24 carat gold leaf.

Who's been there

National Congress for the Oral Health of Filipino Children, 2015; Philippine Paediatric Dental Society's 22nd Annual Convention & Induction Ceremony, 2015

Ways to use the venue

The Forum's main ballroom has a seating capacity for 1,000 and cocktail-style for 1,200. Since it is column free, it can easily be divided into five sections for breakout sessions, smaller functions and simultaneous meetings and workshops.

The ballroom's opulence and grandeur can be a theme in itself. Full banquet and catering facilities and 11 F&B outlets in the resort means a wide array of food choices for planners.

For smaller groups, Red Lantern restaurant for Chinese cuisine seats up to 240 pax and offers five private rooms, while Oasis boasts with its two-storey waterfall as well as tea and cakes the rave of the town. Additionally, the Lyric Theater, outdoor swimming pool, spa and beauty salon can be incorporated in special incentive programmes. – *Rosa Ocampo*



Taiwan

Name of venue

Huashan 1914 Creative Park, Taipei

Seating capacity

Up to 2,000 pax

Background

Huashan 1914 is a multi-purpose park with a renovated building that originally was one of Taiwan's most significant wine factories. It is a new cultural events platform where many large-scale exhibitions, installations, theatre productions and performances have been held.

Why it's unique

While it is located in the centre of Taipei City, it has been lauded as a 'secret base' for a quiet escape from the busy city with its offer of huge spaces in the warehouses. These bookable spaces find a following with planners of art events, concerts, conferences and exhibitions.

Who's been there

The International Committee for the Industrial Heritage Congress, 2012; Facebook Asia-Pacific executives meet and dinner party, 2013

Ways to use the venue

The remodelled, spacious warehouses offer a setting that is both retro and chic, and can fit up to 2,000 pax for conferences, an ideal breakaway from conventional hotels and meeting centres.

Meanwhile, fancy restaurants in this park are ideal for corporates to host dinner parties, such as the Trio Café which offers a beautiful park-side view, and the French VVG (Very Very Good) Thinking restaurant. – *Paige Lee Pei Qi*



India

Name of venue

Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC), Maharashtra

Seating capacity

1,200-1,500 pax theatre-style

Background

The 3,174m² LICC started operations in May 2010 and is managed by Accor India. It offers technologically advanced equipment like Cisco Telepresence, multi-language interpretation, built-in high-definition cameras for web casting and ceiling-mounted drop down screens accessible at the touch of a button. F&B offerings range from gourmet cuisines by world-class chefs to local delicacies like the Maharashtra *thali*.

Why it's unique

The centre is situated in the first planned hill city of India, Lavasa, spread over



Huashan 1914 Creative Park, Taipei



Taiwan

MICE

PARADISE



A winning combination of efficient modernity, richly textured cultures, and breathtaking natural wonders, Taiwan is undeniably a world-class MICE destination that's bound to satisfy.

It's no wonder why Taiwan, with its kaleidoscope of unique offerings, has been on the radar of international travel media and MICE industry authorities. Here's some of what they're saying about what makes Taiwan a perfect MICE hotspot.

Inspiring Design & Innovation

MICE activities of all kinds are certain to benefit from Taiwan's brimming creativity and technological innovations (Bloomberg ranked Taiwan among the top 10 most innovative countries by virtue of its patent activity and high-tech density).

In 2013, it was announced that Taipei would be the host for World Design Capital 2016, with the theme "The Adaptive City—Design in Motion." Taipei itself is an "adaptive city" that continuously updates its MICE infrastructure in line with evolving needs, while maintaining environmental sustainability.

Stability & Development

Taiwan is increasingly recognized for its

stable financial environment. For example, in the 2015 Index of Economic Freedom compiled by the Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal, Taiwan came in an impressive 14th in the world and 5th in the Asia-Pacific.

Taichung, a transport hub, snagged the Intelligent Community of the Year award in 2013 largely for its investment in information and communications technology and its efficiency in developing infrastructure.

Colourful Festivals

MICE planners can include any one of a number of Taiwan's traditional festivals through the year, so delegates can have an unforgettable taste of Taiwan's culture and traditions.

For example, watching more than 100,000 glowing sky lanterns rising in the night during the Pingxi Lantern Festival would be a magical experience for international delegates. This festival, listed as one of Fodor Travel's 15 Festivals to Attend Before You Die, is held just after Chinese New Year and comes complete with a carnival-like atmosphere.

Mouthwatering Cuisine

Taiwan's delicious cuisine is an attraction in its own right and has won worldwide acclaim on global travel sites like Skyscanner (2015) and CNN's Eatocracy

FAST FACTS: WHY TAIWAN?

ACCESSIBILITY

- 5,000 flights to 115 cities weekly
- 828 flights to 54 cities in China

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- Metropolitan rapid transit systems
- High-speed rail

CONVENTION VENUES

- 5 UFI-sanctioned exhibition halls
- 6th in Asia for total exhibition space sold (716,250 square meters)

SUCCESS STORIES

- Taipei World Design Expo 2011 (3,000 pax)
- 2012 JCI World Congress Taipei/Taiwan (10,000 pax)
- 2013 Asia Pacific Cities Summit, APCS (2,300 pax)
- International Convention on QC Circles 2013 (1,500 pax)
- World Congress of Endourology 2014 (2,800 pax)

(2013). Delegates can join bustling crowds of locals on a walk through the Shilin Night Market to sample herbal pork soup, pearl milk tea, and many other authentic local delicacies.

A must-try dessert is Taipei's signature Mango Avalanche—a delightful concoction of shaved ice, fresh fruit cubes, mango pudding, and mango sorbet.

Natural Beauty

Taiwan's efficient transport systems make many of Taiwan's lush natural wonders within a convenient daytrip from the capital city Taipei. After intensive meetings and conferences, delegates can be treated to a relaxing day basking in the hot springs of the Beitou District. For those who love the outdoors, team-building hiking adventures can be planned in the mountains of nearby Yangmingshan National Park.

AD BY BOFT

Organized by: Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA

Implemented by: Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA)

10,000ha of land and designed with the needs of the MICE segment in mind. Within Lavasa, there are various categories of accommodation to fit different budgets, ranging from one-star to serviced apartments to luxurious five-stars.

The venue is situated in serene natural surroundings away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Its glass façade, apart from offering natural light, also offers uninterrupted scenic views of Lavasa. Conference organisers get an option to brand the entire city for the event, starting from the gate of the hill city to other strategic locations within Lavasa.

Who's been there

World Congress on IVF Technologies;
MetLife Insurance incentive dinner

Ways to use the venue

The venue offers small and large halls, outdoor areas and other spaces for meetings, dinner and entertainment. It also has an attached exhibition area. Possible seating arrangements include classroom, cluster, theatre and auditorium style.

Incentive groups can explore picturesque locales of Lavasa and discover a variety of flora and fauna. They can start the day with a walk along the serene nature trails and then enjoy kayaking, angling or jet-skiing. Camping facilities are also available, as are adventure sports like rappelling, rock climbing, jungle treks and zip line at the Xthrill Adventure Academy. – **Rohit Kaul**



China

Name of venue

Society Hill Hotels & Conventions, Tianjin
(2015 grand opening to be confirmed)



Society Hill's outdoor space Cherry Avenue, Tianjin

Seating capacity

Up to 3,600 pax

Background

Society Hill, adjacent to the Tianjin South Railway Station, is a 250,000m² tourism and MICE project being developed by Tianjin National Real Estate Development. It will feature five hotels and a major lifestyle complex comprising a large convention centre with more than 10,000m² of meeting space.

Two hotels will open in the grand opening phase – International Convention Centre Hotel Society Hill Tianjin, where 708 of the 1,500 rooms are ready; and the 400-room dusitD2 Society Hill which is looking at 67 per cent group business (MICE).

Why it's unique

The venue's proximity to Tianjin South Railway Station means Beijing and Shanghai are 30 minutes and five hours away respectively by high-speed rail.

The International Convention Centre Hotel Society Hill Tianjin is a large meeting facility that can accommodate up to 3,600 people. It features a 4,000m² banquet hall, a 4,000m² pillarless conference hall and 50 meeting spaces of varying sizes, with the smallest measuring 36m².

Seafood restaurant Roman seats 700 while South-east Asian-themed Bali Bali Restaurant accommodates 160.

There is a 20,000m² Northern Song Dynasty-themed spa and hot springs.

Ways to use the venue

The Venue is well equipped and spacious for hosting large meetings. Its outdoors spaces, such as the Hanging Gardens and Cherry Avenue, also provide a unique backdrop. For incentive groups, Jiayou Spa offers unusual treatments such as an ultra-fine bubble Silk Bath and a Rock Bath using heated natural rock. – **Caroline Boey**



Malaysia



Simba Hill Gourmet Hall, Pahang, Malaysia

Name of venue

Simba Hill Gourmet Hall at Bukit Gambang Resort City in Gambang, Pahang

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Seating capacity

Up to 750 pax in round seating

Background

The venue opened in May 2013 and is operated by Sentoria Themeparks and Resorts. It serves western and local delights as well as vegetarian food.

Why it's unique

Simba Hill Gourmet Hall is a safari-themed restaurant. A glass wall separates the restaurant from a lions' enclosure, giving diners a close-up view of three white lions. This is the only place in the east coast region where visitors can view these magnificent rare creatures.

Who's been there

Iskandar Investment Group's dinner, 2014

Ways to use the venue

The venue can be used for meetings, with a combination of round and oblong tables for up to 750 pax. A stage can also be set up for speeches, presentations and performances. Clients can also request for audio-visual equipment. Fun-seeking incentive groups can request for special entertainment such as fire eating, magic shows, clown performances, mascot appearances and dance performances. The restaurant can also accommodate clients' request for themes other than safari, as well as decorations matching their corporate colours. – *S Puvaneswary*



Australia

Name of venue

Carriageworks, Sydney

Seating capacity

100-800 pax

Background

Opened officially in 2007 but not used to full capacity until recently, Carriageworks offers five unique function spaces each with an urban industrial feel.

Bay 17 is a theatre space for corporate presentations and seats up to 800 pax theatre-style or 1,000 standing for dinner. Bay 19 is for smaller-scale exhibitions, screenings or workshops, with standing capacity of 120. Bay 20 is a contemporary theatre space for live music, screenings, performances, workshops and corporate presentations, seating up to 270. Tracks 8 & 12 are for private dinners, cocktail parties and corporate training, both featuring natural light, high ceilings and large double doors. Capacity here is up to 150 theatre-style for Track 8 and 100 for Track 12.

Fresh Catering is behind the venue's Cornerstone Bar and Food, designed with two suspended gardens hanging from 10-ton gantry cranes. The restaurant seats 280 pax, and offers casual

lunch and dinner menus featuring shared plates and daily specials. The company also handles catering across all Carriageworks spaces.

Why it's unique

Carriageworks is housed in the old Eveleigh Rail Yards within the emerging Redfern Waterloo precinct, and is developed by the NSW State Government through Arts NSW. The distinctive 19th-century industrial atmosphere of the former railway carriage and blacksmith workshops have been retained, with many heritage iron and brick details.

Who's been there

ACGA Inaugural Conference, 2013; Mercedes Benz Fashion Week

Ways to use the venue

Because there are five different spaces of varying sizes, Carriageworks is ideal for 'progressive' events. Large groups can be split up into five, with events/workshops/dinner courses rotating between differently themed spaces. The acoustics are ideal for live music, and many incentive dinners enjoy performances from musicians and actors. The white walls make the spaces a blank canvas in terms of design – events in the past had opted for everything from lights-off with table candles to red-carpeted floors with chandeliers. –

Natasha Dragun



Carriageworks, Sydney



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For more information about MICE 2015 and Awards Ceremony, please email: mice@oliverkinross.co.uk

For exhibition ticket registration, please visit: www.etches.com/miceasia2015



Weaker gaming revenues have pushed Macau hotels to gear up promotions aimed at business event groups

More for MICE in Macau

New hotels opening this year are adding accommodation and event capacity to the destination, putting a downward pressure on rates. By **Prudence Lui**

With monthly gaming revenues down for nine months since June 2014, Macau's integrated resorts are tuning up their promotional efforts to increase non-gaming revenue, specifically from business event groups.

Hongkong-based Vigor Tours' manager of Greater China, Coral Wu, told *TTGmice* that Macau hoteliers have been dangling "generous offers" for MICE groups, such as buy-one-get-one-free ferry tickets.

Wu noted that "these aggressive promotions" started early this year and had intensified in recent months.

"I hardly saw such practices last year," she said, adding that the Macau Government Tourist Office's ongoing Incentive Travel Stimulation

Program provides additional help for the trade in courting more business event groups.

Although the massive 3,896-room Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central saw an 80 per cent leap in group business last year over 2013 and hosted 55,000 delegates attending 228 events in 2014, its promotional engine is still revving for more MICE business.

Corinne Janssen, director of sales, associations & sales operations, said: "We have just launched a new MICE offer, *3rd Night Free or Dinner on Us*, in partnership with Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao to encourage visitors to stay longer in Macau.

"While it is still too soon to say whether big conferences and incentives will get a boost (from this promotion), we have so far generated

a lot of interest because it is such a rich offer for MICE delegates."

The *3rd Night Free or Dinner on Us* gives delegates the option to stay an extra day in Macau or enjoy dinner with the hotel's compliments. To enjoy this offer, planners must contract at least 10 rooms, up to a maximum of 500, for two consecutive nights as well as spend a minimum HK\$1,600 (US\$206) in banquet F&B per room, per stay. Contracts must be inked before May 31, 2015 for arrivals between April 1 and July 2, and between August 30 and September 30 this year.

Janssen added that Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central expects to host more than 250 events this year, and that she isn't too concerned with Macau's faltering gaming business.

"The property has never been too

reliant upon gaming. Since opening, our focus has been on MICE and leisure business," she explained.

Industry players said the rise in MICE-focused hotel promotions was also a result of increasing competition in the hotel sector, thanks to several new hotel openings this year.

New properties that are set to open for business this year include JW Marriott Hotel Macau, The Ritz-Carlton Macau and The St. Regis Macao, Cotail Central (see *Need to know*, page 32). These hotels are outfitted with function rooms.

According to Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the destination currently has over 28,000 hotel rooms and 170,000m² of meeting space.

IPIM informed *TTGmice* that another 21 hotels are under construction and these will raise Macau's capacity to over 42,000 rooms in the next few years. These developments also include new meeting spaces and attractions such as a facility for Broadway performances at the expanded Galaxy Macau, and Asia's tallest ferris wheel at 130m at Studio City Macao.

"All these new elements are building Macau up as a perfect destination for MICE and leisure," said a IPIM spokesperson.

Bruno Simões, CEO of DOC DMC, revealed that last year many large hotels with more than 500 rooms had rejected group bookings from event planners for more than 20 rooms over weekdays.

"Now, all these hotels can give me more than 80 rooms!" he said. "With the new (hotel) openings, competition will definitely increase. I anticipate drops in rates of more than 25 per cent after September 2015. Planners should grab the opportunity to host events in Macau in 2015 and 2016."

Antony Box, director of sales and marketing, Macau Hong Kong Sales Office, Grand Coloane Resort, said business performance so far this year isn't strong.

"We are not confident as a hotel that, given the current business climate, things will pick up quickly... at least not in the first half of 2015."

"This may be due to the extra room inventory on the market resulting from the release of casino room blocks and new hotel open-

ings by mid-year. Hotels in Zhuhai are coming in to compete due to extended cross-border opening times.

"I expect competition (among venues/hotels) to worsen with new openings like Studio City and the expansion of Galaxy this year."

Janssen, however, is taking the hotel boom in her stride, saying the new openings are "coming of age" for Macau and are beneficial to the destination.

"These new attractions give MICE delegates a good reason to keep returning to explore something different. With new room inventory, rates will remain extremely competitive, especially in comparison with other first-tier Asian cities," she said.

Although MV Destination's general manager, Clemson Lo, is unimpressed by the ongoing intensified hotel promotions because business events take "years of advanced planning" and will not be boosted by such offers in the short run, he expects to benefit from downward rate pressure brought on by the rise in new room inventory.

Lo expects rate to dip some 10 to 15 percent.

Explore vibrant Rua do Cunha for keepsakes and tasty local eats

Ideas A three-day incentive tour of Macau's key draws

Day1 Start the tour in the afternoon with an art and culture excursion. Activities include taichi, fan dance, calligraphy and traditional Chinese arts classes.

Come evening journey into Taipa Village in search of a dining venue that appeals to your taste and budget. The destination offers a variety of restaurants, with Rua do Cunha – a narrow pedestrian street in Taipa Village – in particular offering a slew of souvenir shops, restaurants and dessert shops.

Day2 Choose to begin your morning with a slow stroll through the Macau Giant Panda Pavilion at Seac Pai Van Park in Coloane or by feeding the speed demon inside you with a go-kart race at the Coloane Karting

Track in Cotai District.

In the afternoon, experience the sights, tastes and sounds of the Historic Centre of Macau, a UNESCO-listed world heritage.

Later, indulge in an authentic Portuguese dinner at the notable Macau Military Club. The venue dates back to 1870 and was reopened as a restaurant in 1995. End the night on a high note by catching the spectacular House of Dancing Water show in the City of Dreams.

Day3 Make time for golf at the 19-hole Caesars Golf Macau, located at the southern end of Cotai District. It's the only semi-private golf course open to both members and visitors in Macau. If golf is not your cup of tea, retreat to the club's spa where spa treatments are on offer.

*Itinerary by Macau Government
Tourism Office*



Need to know



The Ritz-Carlton Macau

Galaxy expands

Galaxy Macau integrated resort will throw open the doors to two new hotels on the 27th this month.

JW Marriott Hotel Macau, the brand's largest property in Asia, offers 1,015 rooms while The Ritz-Carlton Macau has 250 suites.

Both will boost the integrated resort's MICE appeal with a suite of event spaces. JW Marriott Hotel Macau offers planners more than 2,700m² of function space including a pillarless Grand Ballroom. The Ritz-Carlton Macau houses a pillarless Grand Ballroom and two meeting rooms.

Improved air access into Macau

Air Macau has increased the frequency of its Osaka and Bangkok services. The carrier now operates daily flights to and from Osaka, and thrice a week to and from the Thai capital.

Air access from mainland Chinese cities are also up. Air China launched a Beijing-Macau route on March 5 while China Southern Airlines has plans to debut a Wuhan-Macau service.



More to see and do at Sofitel Macau At Ponte 16

Sofitel Macau At Ponte 16 is partnering Hong Kong 3D Museum to roll out the destination's first large-scale 3D museum in mid-2015. The 1,500m² museum will feature more than 150 photography points in six theme zones, offering visitors a chance to pose for interesting photographs with various exhibits and 3D paintings. Sensory elements such as lighting effects, analog sounds and props will up the fun factor.

The hotel's artistic venture includes a limited-time collection of art pieces by French sculptor Mickaël Oubrénovitch. As part of the Le French May festival, the hotel lobby will display five to six spectacular tree trunk sculptures from now until June 30.

A fine way to arrive

The new TurboJET Premier Plus service, launched on March 1, offers a complimentary door-to-door shuttle service for Premier Grand Class/Premier VIP Cabin passengers travelling from Hong Kong (Sheung Wan) to Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal.

Available on any sailings between 09:00 to 21:00, the shuttle takes guests from Macau Ferry Terminal to any destination in Macau.

To utilise this service, simply book in advance and upon clearing immigration, proceed to the Macau Premier Shuttle Service meeting point in the arrival hall. The service departs 15 minutes after vessel arrival.



The St. Regis to rise soon in Macau

Scheduled to open in 3Q2015, The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central will add 400 rooms and suites to the mega development by Sands China.

Rooms will range from 53m² to 477m² in size, and meeting planners will have access to nine meeting spaces totalling 599m². The Astor Ballroom can accommodate 350 guests for banquets or 572 pax in a theatre setup.

Other facilities at the hotel include the legendary St. Regis Bar and an outdoor pool with 2,457m² of deck space that houses private cabanas.

The hotel boasts a seamless connection to Sheraton Macao Hotel.





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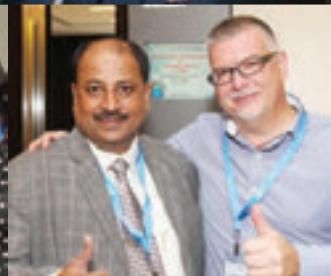


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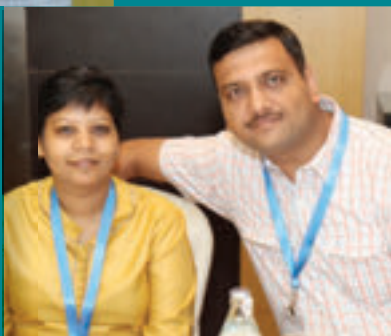


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Rebound on the horizon



Chinese MICE groups are starting to favour Malaysia again, with a proper rebound likely once Air China resumes Beijing flights. By **S Puvaneswary**

The Malaysian government is set to recover lost business from China with visa fee waiver granted to Chinese nationals from February 15 up to December 31, 2015.

KL Tan, general manager of Borneo Trails Tours & Travel in Kota Kinabalu, said the waiver would motivate Chinese corporates and organisers to choose Malaysia as a friendly tourism destination, and that the introduction is timely due to the nationwide *Malaysia Year of Festivals* campaign (see *Need to know*, page 35) this year.

“Organisers can time their programmes to coincide with some of the festivals,” he added.

Chinese arrivals had dived fol-

lowing the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines’ (MAS) Beijing-bound MH370 flight on March 8 last year, with 153 Chinese nationals on board.

Minister of Tourism & Culture Malaysia, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, said the country lost 540,000 Chinese tourists in 2014 due to MAS’ two aircraft tragedies.

Tourism Malaysia and the travel trade are concerned as China had been the largest medium-haul market and third-largest market for Malaysia after Singapore and Indonesia.

Average spend per Chinese tourist in 2013 was RM3,092 (US\$973), higher than Singapore (RM2,330), Brunei (RM2,291) and the rest of South-east Asia. It also topped other North Asian markets, followed closely

by Japan (RM2,895).

Signs of a rebound in the Chinese business events segment was first noticed in 4Q2014 when Perfect China, a health and wellness company ranked the 10th direct sales company globally, sent 4,000 delegates to Malaysia for an incentive/conference from August 2 to 10.

The event at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) attracted the most number of delegates, compared with the previous two conventions held there in 2011 and 2012, which attracted 3,200 and 2,200 distributors respectively.

Terry Lee, executive director, Sun-flower Holidays and logistics coordinator for the gathering, said: “KLCC’s efforts to engage with its China clients

Putrajaya International Convention Centre is gaining popularity among business event organisers, thanks to its large spaces and competitive rates

Destination: Malaysia

with Mandarin-speaking staff, a Mandarin corporate video and business presentation, and an in-house Chinese kitchen contributed to making the client confident in the venue. And having had two excellent outings here previously, Perfect China was happy to return a third time.”

Lee believes Malaysia's positioning as one of the most value-for-money destinations for the industry also played a part.

Mint Leong, managing director, Sunflower Holidays, said it is still not easy to convince Chinese MICE organisers to choose Malaysia as other countries are also wooing this market with attractive offers. Due to safety concerns after the two MAS tragedies last year, Leong said some organisers from China avoided taking MAS flights.

Leong added this poses a barrier to attracting high-end MICE business due to limited choices of two

foreign full-fledged airlines, China Eastern and Cathay Pacific with direct services.

She said: “High-end corporate clients we target will not consider low-cost airlines, even though there are direct flights.”

However, the good news for the travel trade is that Air China may resume flights from Beijing to Kuala Lumpur in Q4 after it suspended Beijing-Kuala Lumpur flights in 2014. “They have given us strong indications they may return,” said a Malaysia Airports Holdings source.

Yet another challenge was the need for more large convention centres, especially in the main tourist destinations.

Leong said: “Some organisers want to have their main event and dinner at the same venue; it is difficult to find a convention centre with a meeting hall and a space for dining that can each accommodate 5,000 or

more people.”

Meanwhile, a short drive from the capital, Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) is gaining popularity.

Winnie Ng, deputy general manager, Pearl Holiday Travel, said its management is “flexible and friendly”. Rates are also competitive, she added, sharing that a one-day conference for 1,000 people at PICC offers substantial savings of almost 40 per cent compared with having the event in Kuala Lumpur.

PICC is targeting a greater share of business events from China and will work with Chinese incentive players to offer dinners and daily live show *Fantasy Rainforest* from September.

Besides participating at IT&CM China last month, CEO Badlishah Ahmad said PICC will join a roadshow with Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau in August to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Chengdu.



Coming up soon
is the Sky Avenue

A whole new world of MICE options

Entering its 50th year, Resorts World Genting has rejuvenated its offerings, its newest being the exclusive Elite C-Suite Deal for C-level leaders and executives.

Choices for meeting planners include luxury limousine services, reserved car parks, golf games, dining around the resort, gourmet tea break

menus and hotel accommodation.

The integrated resort has also seen an inventory increase at the First World Hotel of 1,286 rooms, bringing the First World's inventory total to 7,345 rooms and that of the resort to 9,858 rooms (including budget, four-star, five-star and two luxury properties, Crockfords and Maxims).

Last December, Horizon 50 was launched. Located within walking distance from Genting International Convention Centre, the facility offers a journey through time, showcasing the birth and growth of Resorts World Genting, presented through projections, background music and special effects. A fly-through video and visual boards also add to the sensorial experience.

Meeting planners will also find an option in a special venue called The Black Box inside Horizon 50.

“With capacity of 50 people and equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual system, this venue can be used for a private cocktail event, product launch or presentation,” said Stella Sum, assistant vice-president MICE.

Meanwhile, more new offerings scheduled to open in 2016 include 20th Century Fox World theme park and nearby Sky Avenue, which will comprise 165 retail and F&B outlets as well as a cable car station.

Winnie Ng, deputy general manager, Pearl Holiday Travel, said: “The new offerings have created more interest in the destination (Resorts World Genting) and more options for MICE organisers’ itinerary creation. It helps the destination to compete against other integrated resorts in this region. We have pitched the resort to a MICE organiser from China with a meeting and incentive group of 3,000 in 2016. He has done a recce and we are now waiting for his decision.”

Need to know



Three new luxury chalets amid the rainforest

Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sabah recently opened three new luxury chalets, bringing the total number of chalets to 31. The lodge is nestled in a magnificent setting alongside Danum River that flows through Sabah's largest protected Lowland Rainforest – Danum Valley Conservation Area with 43,800ha of pristine and undisturbed tropical flora and fauna in eastern Sabah. It opens year round.

Festive twist for MICE

Incorporate special events in conjunction with *Malaysia Year of Festivals 2015* (MyFest 2015) campaign to further enhance MICE programmes.

Themed Endless Celebrations, the year-long calendar of events offers more than 200 events related to cultural festivals, arts and music showcases, food promotions, shopping and sports.

Events include Borneo Jazz Festival and World Harvest Festival, both in May; KK Jazz Festival in June; Malaysia Busking Festival in August; Festival of ASEAN Cultural Expressions in October; Malaysia Mask Festival in November; and 1Malaysia Year End Sale throughout November and December.

For a full list of events, visit www.myfest2015.com.my.

MyCEB introduces new campaign and programme

Malaysia Convention & Incentive Bureau (MyCEB) in February launched the *Malaysia Like Never Before* campaign and *Malaysian Twin Deal X* programme for corporate meeting and incentive planners worldwide.

Malaysia Like Never Before, tailored to the incentives market, highlights the unique and unheard features of five key Malaysian destinations: Langkawi, George Town, Kuala Lumpur, Mount Kinabalu and Kuching. Though already familiar to regulars of the business events circuit, the campaign has reimagined these destinations, guaranteeing a fresh experience to visitors.

The *Malaysia Twin Deal X* programme comprising Deal 1 and Deal 2 provides value-added support and incentive rewards for international corporate meeting and incentive groups, depending on the group size.

Business event organisers and planners can visit www.likeneverbefore.my to find out more about these new initiatives. The website also features an event proposal generator to get organisers started on their journey to Malaysia.

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Paris Tourism Office

The iconic Eiffel Tower and Paris' reputation for being a romantic, culture-rich city have drawn incentive groups

Something new to love in Paris

The city's CVB is spotlighting new and revitalised venues to draw South-east Asian groups, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

The Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau (Paris CVB) had recently concluded its third South-east Asian sales mission, touring Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. And for the first time, the destination promotion effort included a stop in the Philippines. Come October 2016, the Paris CVB will add Vietnam to its sales mission in a bid to net more business from the region.

Speaking to *TTGmice* during the 10th Rendez-vous en France Travel Workshop, an annual travel tradeshow, Patricia Barthelemy, marketing manager of Paris CVB, said: "These two new markets (the Philippines and Vietnam) have a tremendous untapped potential and we see that it is important to go in now and promote ourselves to them."

According to Barthelemy, Paris welcomed 30 million visitors in 2014, up from 29 million in 2013, and business and MICE travellers made up 40 per cent of the destination's footfalls.

She added that there were approximately 600,000 visitors from South-east Asia last year, a three-fold increase from 200,000 in 2013, a result of the CVB's increased efforts to raise awareness of the destination over the past three years.

While there are currently about 30,000 visitors from the Philippines and Vietnam each year, Barthelemy said the CVB is targeting to pump this number up to 100,000 each in five to eight years' time.

Paris CVB is also eager to attract more corporate event groups with new and revitalised products.

"What we need to do now is to get in touch with our key counterparts in South-east Asia and get them acquainted with the destination so they will know what to promote," she said.

As such, the CVB has also organised fam trips for South-east Asian buyers.

"Paris is popular especially for incentive groups because the name of the city stands out...there is this sense of romanticism and culture that attracts people," Barthelemy said, adding that the city's plethora of new unique venues will charm and impress corporate groups.

An attraction that would appeal to business event planners is the Musee Picasso which was restored and reopened last October. A private visit followed by a cocktail for up to 80 guests can be arranged outside of its opening hours. The art gallery can support larger gatherings too. Its reception space can accommodate 300 guests while its open-air terrace,

overlooking the Marais district, can host 100 pax.

Planners desiring a playful venue can consider the new Magic Mirror ballroom within the Musée des Arts Forains. The circular venue, made to look like a fantasy world with mirrors and wooden beams, can accommodate up to 200 guests.

For large-scale corporate events, the Bercy Arena should come to mind. Renovations are due to complete soon and the venue is expected to reopen this October. The refreshed Bercy Arena will have 20,000 seats, a grand hall, a restaurant, a bar and a lounge-terrace. VIP areas totalling 4,000m² make Bercy Arena suitable for high-end corporate events.

Christophe Floch, director of KTS France, a DMC, said: "We know how important it is for the Asians to impress their guests, and there is never a shortage of impressive experiences here in Paris. We just have to do more marketing to show Asian clients what is available."

Floch shared that there has been

"It is clear that there is greater spending power in clients from (South-east Asia)... they will not go for anything less than a four-star hotel..."

Christophe Floch
Director, KTS France

a 10 per cent rise in client requests coming from Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.

"It is clear that there is greater spending power in clients from these countries because we see a rise in demand (as well as) new expectations. For instance they will not go for anything less than a four-star hotel and it has to be centrally located," he added.

Stella Loh, manager of MICE, Golden Tourworld Travel, Malaysia, welcomes Paris CVB's efforts in highlighting new and refreshed attractions and venues.

She said: "Malaysians are a very well-travelled bunch and Europe will always be one of their top priority

destinations, especially for incentive programmes. Right now we are looking to explore deeper into France and to host (our groups) in unusual places, such as in the mountainous regions. We are keen to offer beyond the usual sights."

Alex Djunisap, vice president of Indonesia-based AntaVaya Leisure, noted a 10 per cent growth in the number of Paris-bound corporate groups over the past two years. He believes the number will grow when visa on arrival is offered.

Djunisap explained: "Paperwork is one of the most tiring (travel) procedures for our clients and it is especially trying when you have a big group."



Need to know



The Peninsula Hotels debuts in the city of love

The Peninsula Hotels has opened its first property in Paris. The 200-key Hôtel The Peninsula Paris is located in a late 19th century classic Haussmanian building on Avenue Kléber, near the Arc de Triomphe and Champs-Élysées.

Event planners can host events with up to 100 guests in the hotel's opulent ballroom, or utilise one of three function rooms for smaller gatherings.

The hotel is also home to six exquisite dining venues, one of which sits on the rooftop and stars a bar and terrace that comes with stunning 360-degree views of the French capital.

Making magic for MICE in Disneyland

Located a 35-minute drive from the Paris city centre is Disneyland Paris, a fun theme park that comes equipped with flexible event spaces to fit 50 to 25,000 guests.

Event planners can choose from two conference centres, 95 meeting rooms, two event spaces – one 2,300m² and the other 6,500m², a 1,570-seat amphitheatre, and 8,200 rooms in 14 hotels – among many other facilities. With ready entertainment at the doorstep, corporate gatherings can easily get a dash of fun when all solemn matters are done.

Revamped L'Arc Paris welcomes private events

L'Arc Paris, one of the most iconic clubs in Paris has reopened after an 18-month refit. Facing the Place de l'Étoile, the venue's garden offers a unique view of the lively scene around the majestic Arc de Triomphe.

Opened on weekends for exclusive events, L'Arc Paris makes an ideal venue for prestigious private functions. It can accommodate up to 400 people for a cocktail party or 120 for a dinner banquet.

A fresh look for Pullman Paris Tour Eiffel

Following a full renovation last year, Pullman Paris Tour Eiffel opened its doors to offer refurbished rooms and spaces. The 430-room hotel is located just a stone's throw from the iconic iron lattice tower and the Trocadero Plaza overlooking the river Seine. Fully equipped with Wi-Fi, the four-star hotel is equipped with 23 meeting rooms that can seat 15 to 400 people in theatre style. Other facilities include F&B outlets and a fitness centre.



New music to the ears of event planners

Hailed widely as France's latest music temple, the Philharmonie de Paris – a 2,400-seat concert hall designed by architect Jean Nouvel – opened this year. Dedicated to musical extravaganzas, the venue is an art in itself with its floating balconies and suspended cloud-shaped sound reflectors. The whole hall can be booked for private events as long as the timing is outside the performance schedule.

Lindy Wee

Her love for the exhibitions business started in the 70s when she was a part-time booth assistant. Today, as the new chief executive of Singapore Exhibition Services, Wee talks to **Karen Yue** about taking the business forward

Your resume is interesting - you've been with Singapore Exhibition Services (SES) since 1983, working through different departments.

Yes, I've been in various departments here, spending about seven years in each. That is a long time to learn how each department functions, and to accumulate a wealth of knowledge of this industry.

Prior to that I was temping with SES for a couple of years. In fact, I had my first taste of the exhibitions industry in the 70s when I took on a part-time job in manning a booth at an exhibition. I loved it, and then went on to work at several global exhibition companies like Reed.

Well, I've never ventured out of this industry and I sometimes wonder what life is like in other sectors. (Laughs)

From booth assistant to the chief executive of a major exhibition firm. That's a motivating story for anyone hoping to make a career in exhibitions!

You could say I've worked my way up the ranks in SES, and this has helped make transiting into my new role a smooth one. I was able to run with issues right away, and my staff didn't have to pause and explain what was going on.

What was one crucial change in the company you were responsible for?

I was last with the conference department as a conference director. When I joined that department (in 2001), conference was not a main focus of SES because we are an exhibitions company. But I saw an opportunity there as well as the need to grow the conference department.

The industry was evolving then – it still is now – and we needed to provide more than just a marketplace to showcase products and services. We need to bring to the table knowledge and thought leadership, and have a way for policy-makers to come together. The conference provides such a platform.

Six months into my role, I asked my

conference producers what one must do to keep up with so many topics across so many industry sectors (SES produces exhibitions for the communications, lifestyle, engineering and machinery industries). One of my conference producers was an experienced lady and her advice to me was to devour whitepapers for breakfast. The first whitepaper I devoured was on nanotechnology, a 400-plus-page monster that took me seven mornings to read.

It was extremely difficult to understand the technical aspects of certain industries and know it enough to pick out hot topics. You need heartware for this job.

We have a system that separates programme shaping, logistics and marketing. We are clear about what we need to achieve. In our case, our content creation focuses on the buyers, unlike other conference production companies that tend to lean towards vendors, as these are the people who would come into the event as sponsors. I stay away from that. I've set a simple mission for the team – all our KPIs are based on the buyers. We will not have a platform that only sells vendors' products and services. We focus on things that will interest the buyers. If they are willing to pay to attend our conference, we know we are on the right track.

I'm glad to say the conference department is very profitable today. Our conferences are seeing a growing number of attendees, so the department is ready to take things to the next level. We have built a strong foundation.

What's the next level then?

We want to grow the conferences in the verticals we operate in. For example, the conference topics presented at Food&HotelAsia (FHA) is not as comprehensive as we like it to be.

We aim to grow our conferences by expanding into the breadth of the value chain of the industry our exhibitions operate in. For example, the inaugural



Future Factories and Manufacturing Asia conference, which will be held alongside MTA (a precision engineering industry event in April). Future Factories is all about digital factory, and this conference provides industry professionals an avenue to broaden their insights into Asia's manufacturing industry.

Another example is the new conference on Central Kitchen which is to develop specific segments of the food and hospitality industry. The intention is to repeat these conferences on an annual basis.

Besides growth for the conference department, what other goals have you set for SES as the new chief?

I've given myself a double-digit growth for our exhibitions business. Revenue for exhibitions is tied to the sale of square metres. While we could simply grow revenue by operating more shows, I'd rather grow the size of our exhibitions to hit revenue targets. To achieve that, we have to attract more visitors to our shows. We must offer something more than the tradeshow they have in their home country.

Still, SES has grown its portfolio of shows. Years ago Stephen Tan (former chief executive, current chairman), shared with me his visions to expand into Myanmar. SES launched Manufacturing Myanmar and Oil & Gas Myanmar last year and they did great. The country is opening up for business

across a spectrum of industries. Will SES be doing more in Myanmar?

We are pacing ourselves. We are not going to rush into Myanmar because first we need to have supporting infrastructure in order to grow our shows. The first Manufacturing Myanmar was held at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon and we used up all available space. There is no room for growth without sufficient physical space.

Going into Myanmar is exciting and we want to be in there, but at a good pace. We will have the second edition of both Manufacturing Myanmar and Oil & Gas Myanmar this year. We will continue to keep Myanmar in our line of sight.

Does other Asian countries appeal to SES? Say, Sri Lanka, where the government is pushing for industrial and commercial growth?

Well, we did get a few offers to go there, and have done a few studies on the viability of expanding into Sri Lanka – in fact one is ongoing. I can tell you now that going into Sri Lanka this year is not a venture I'm ready for.

We've got to look at infrastructure. The destination's infrastructure can pose an extremely large challenge, and by infrastructure I don't mean just the venue. Machines that are brought into a destination for exhibition purposes will be taxed, never mind that these equipment will leave at the end of the show. Taxes and import duties are tough obstacles for show organisers and exhibitors; they cannot be waived.

Liquor tax is also another issue for us. Say I manage to recruit a big company from Italy or France to come and show-

case their wines at a Food&Hotel show in a new destination, but then inform them that there will be a 40 per cent liquor tax. The company will simply say, no thanks, I'm not going there!

Transportation, logistics, the availability and size of convention halls, water and electricity supply, and security are all the things we have to consider before deciding to launch a show in a new destination.

You've pointed out how venue capacity can limit a show's growth. So are there enough venues to support your dream of upsizing existing events?

When the Singapore Expo opened in March 1999 (with six halls), Stephen, who was my boss then, told me, "We need to fill it up". I thought he was joking. How could we? But we did.

To me, at that time, the Singapore Expo was a world-class development and being able to fill it up would put SES in good standing. You could say the Singapore Expo fired me up. I was then the project director for FHA. So in April that year, FHA became the first show to use up the entire Singapore Expo. And in 2014 we were the first event organiser to fill up all ten halls of Singapore Expo (it was expanded in 2005) with FHA!

Today, we are short on space (for FHA) in Singapore because there are no expansion plans in sight (for the Singapore Expo). In Vietnam, our shows are using up the entire Saigon Exhibition & Convention Centre. It is the same situation in Myanmar.

Surely SES cannot let capacity constraints dull its growth plans. Will

hosting your shows in multiple venues work?

Splitting a single event across different floors is not an attractive option because of floor loading issues. Spreading exhibits and visitors across several floors also poses many logistical issues and that is every organiser's nightmare.

However, splitting a single event across two different exhibition centres is a solution we will consider. In fact, this isn't new to us. We have done CommunicAsia at Marina Bay Sands and BroadcastAsia at Suntec Singapore (in 2011), with loop shuttle buses running between the two venues. That worked well although we couldn't please everybody.

You said earlier that this job requires heartware. Has SES been able to attract enthusiastic individuals to support its growth plans? Asia's service and business events industry is, after all, facing a manpower crunch.

The exhibition industry has been lucky because it is perceived as being glamorous. The job offers plenty of opportunities to travel and to interact with people from everywhere. This isn't a desk-bound job. These are plus points for young people today.

For us, it is important to attract and retain the elite. It is a challenge to get people to stay. People think, "I've been there, done that. What's next?". As a company, if we are unable to offer that next level of career growth soon, staff will leave.

However, for the exhibition industry, there's so much to learn and we need staff to be patient. I've been with SES and in this job for 32 years and I'm still learning.

A VARIED PORTFOLIO OF EVENTS

Communications

- » CommunicAsia, Singapore
- » EnterpriseIT, Singapore
- » BroadcastAsia, Singapore

Lifestyle

- » Food&HotelAsia, Singapore
- » ProWine Asia, Singapore
- » Food & HotelVietnam, Ho Chi Minh City

Engineering

- » OSEA, Singapore
- » OGmTech, Singapore
- » Oil & Gas Myanmar, Yangon

Machinery

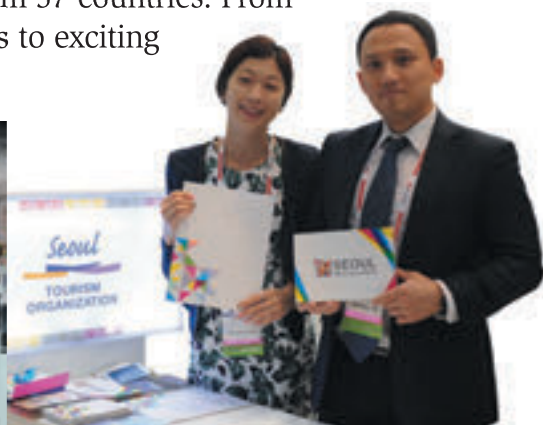
- » MTA, Singapore
- » MTA VIETNAM, Ho Chi Minh City
- » Manufacturing Myanmar, Yangon



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**What's
next?**

Next month, read all about the new generation of **hotels** that are billed as the 'new luxe' and find out how they can cater for luxury corporate events. Also, travel with us to Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam to see what's brewing in their business events sector. Don't miss it.

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