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IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific
September 30, 2014 • Bangkok, Thailand

Bangkok MICE recovers

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Hannah Koh

BANGKOK'S events sector suffered tremendous fallout from the months-long political protests that plagued the city earlier this year and the subsequent military coup that took place in May, but sellers and buyers at IT&CMA are sanguine that MICE business will pick up again for the Thai capital although it has yet to reach pre-crisis levels.

"The political crisis greatly impacted our hotel because we are in the Ratchaprasong area. Occupancy went from the upper 80 to lower 30, a loss of about 50 percentage points," said David Barrett, executive director, events at Amari Watergate Bangkok and Amari Orchid Pattaya.

Dubbing the military intervention "a blessing", he added: "The situation has changed dramatically since the military government brought stability socially, economically and politically. (MICE) business is now on the upswing, not just from Asia but farther afield."

Asia has proven more resil-

ient than longhaul markets, with the strongest recovery recorded from India, Singapore and China, Barrett noted. "Thailand is on sale at the moment, and Indians cannot resist a bargain. Thailand's visa fee waiver for Chinese visitors is also a great shot in the arm, having brought back leisure and MICE traffic from China."

"We are seeing a major comeback from corporates in Singapore," he remarked. "While MICE business from Indonesia dipped due to the Thai political crisis and their own presidential elections, it is showing encouraging signs of recovery now."

Similarly, Kris Srisatin, founder & managing director of Streams Event Asia Thailand, said: "We are not totally recovered yet but we are starting to gain requests. We are seeing more enquiries after the martial law, compared with during the political crisis. It is true that business dropped during the last quarter, but we expect to get better business for the first and second quarters of 2015. I don't foresee long-term impact on business."

"For MICE business, it takes a year or longer to win them back and consider Thailand a destination again. The Singapore corporate segment has recovered quite fast, and meetings from Singapore are coming back."

International buyers also share a strong confidence in the revival of Bangkok's MICE sector. Konrad Ong, managing director of MICE Hubs Malaysia, said: "Bangkok - and Thailand overall - is an evergreen destination that can sell by itself, due to its many possibilities for MICE."

However, Barrett admitted that unlike previous crises, Bangkok is "taking a longer time to rebound this time round". He opined that it could be mainly due to aggressive competition for MICE business from neighbouring countries, media coverage of Thailand that is not up-to-date and dwells on Thailand's instability, as well as the travel policies of some companies against having events in countries with a government that is not democratically elected.

On a more positive note, he is upbeat that a full recovery in Thailand's MICE market can be expected by late 2015, once national elections take place.

cost effective as compared to having medical check-ups done in the US. In May, we also took a sales incentive group of 110 delegates to South Korea. In the future, we plan to do sales incentive meetings for our clients on air safety there."

Another US buyer, Tisa L Nava, programme director at Agora Global Meetings and

Talking numbers

811 The number of exhibitors from 261 companies and organisations at this year's IT&CMA and CTW at Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld.

5,000 The gross exhibition area in square metres at the show this year. Cambodia and Switzerland are the new national pavilions exhibiting at the show, while the largest pavilions belong to Thailand, Macau and Malaysia.

537 The total number of buyers and corporate travel managers attending the show this year.

395 The number of buyers from 47 countries/territories, with 45 per cent from Asia-Pacific, 42 per cent from Europe, eight per cent from Americas & Pacific and six per cent from Others. India, Poland and Singapore contributed the largest number of international buyers.

58 The percentage of new buyers this year. They hail from Argentina, Austria, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

142 The number of corporate travel managers from 12 countries/territories, with 99 per cent from Asia-Pacific and one per cent from beyond. The largest participation is from India and China.

"Thailand is on sale at the moment, and Indians cannot resist a bargain. Thailand's visa fee waiver for Chinese visitors is also a great shot in the arm, having brought back leisure and MICE traffic from China."

David Barrett

Executive director, events, Amari Watergate Bangkok and Amari Orchid Pattaya

In brief

Hilton rolls out MICE campaign for Thailand hotels

Hilton Worldwide is offering planners incentives when they confirm their meeting or event at any of the nine participating Hilton properties in Thailand from October 1, 2014 to November 30, 2014. Incentives will apply for meetings and events held from October 1, 2014 through to April 30, 2015 with a minimum booking of 25 room nights per meeting or event. Visit www.hiltonasiaevents.com/discoverthailand.

Shangri-La's Sunglasses at Work

Meeting attendees at Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, Singapore can leverage its destination lifestyle-meeting concept comprising activities for CSR, nature and an adrenaline rush. These include attempting acrobatic stunts 8m off ground, beach cleaning and herb harvesting.

US business to Asia on the ascent

By S Puvaneswary

SOME US buyers at IT&CM Asia said they have seen an increase in interest for Asia as a meetings and incentive destination.

Captain S Rajan, president & CEO, Air Safety Equipment, said the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Beijing have become popular MICE destinations, largely due to the availability of direct flights.

Year-on-year, the company has seen a 19 per cent increase in MICE business to China, which is the result of a three per cent increase in incentives, 10 per cent increase in product launches and six per cent increase in meetings.

According to Rajan, his company has also started to send some pilots for their annual medical check-ups in South Korea this year. He said: "Thirty pilots were sent



S Rajan

President & CEO, Air Safety Equipment US

to South Korea this year but in the coming years, this will increase as we have a total of 600 pilots. Treatment in South Korea is substantially more

conferences, said she has seen more meetings and conferences to Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and China especially because of the robust economy in Asia and MNCs setting up offices in this part of the world.

"In May, we took a sales incentive group to South Korea. We plan to do more sales incentive meetings for our clients there."

She added that incentives are doing well too because many have not been to Asia, which is seen as exotic and special. "We usually suggest an itinerary of seven nights and one destination because flying to Asia is longhaul and you need time to recover from jet lag," said Nava. Destinations that are benefiting include beach destinations such as Phuket and Cebu.

centive meetings for our clients on air safety there."

Flight Centre Singapore courts business travel

IN A bid to capture a slice of the corporate travel pie, Flight Centre last week opened its flagship Business Travel Centre in Singapore, providing specialist services to the segment.

Flight Centre managing director Singapore, Suyin Lee, said: "The opening of this office is well timed to meet the growing small and medium enterprise travel segment in Singapore."

Highlighting the agency's USPs, she said: "Our business travel customers are able to leverage Flight Centre's global buying power to access competitive airfares and hotel rates."

"Our travel manager can tap into multiple fare sourcing to provide not just the best value, but flexibility too. We have access to the latest range of fares and rates, all backed up by our lowest airfare guarantee."

Pointing out that business travellers' biggest bugbears are last-minute changes, Lee added that this is where Flight Centre's 24-hour emergency assistance helpdesk will come in handy. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Upbeat over Khon Kaen

By **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

KHON Kaen – which lies in the country's north-eastern region of Isaan and was named Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's (TCEB) fifth official MICE city last year – has established itself as a domestic meetings destination, but its potential for international events has yet to be fully realised, according to industry members.

Sirikwan Tesarin, assistant director of sales – corporate, Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid, said: "Eighty per cent of our MICE business is from the government sector, and the remaining is from the corporate sector, usually on a smaller scale of between 50-100 pax, ranging from pharmaceutical to automobile companies hosting dinners for their regional salespersons." Education conferences also make up a big portion of the city's meetings.

Besides two international hotels (Pullman and Centara), boutique properties in Khon Kaen are also gearing up for the

city's rising MICE prospects. Said Pasuta Sukmanop, resort manager of Wishing Tree Resort: "Due to the demand we're seeing, we have plans to expand the meeting facilities to accommodate an additional 200-300 pax and afford MICE groups the possibilities to organise outdoor activities at our resort's riverside location."



Pornthip: more promotions needed

Pornthip Hirunkate, managing director, Destination Asia Thailand sees "great potential" in developing Khon Kaen, together with Isaan in general, particularly for provinces in close proximity to Laos.

"The scope for exploring local heritage and learning about the legendary Khmer empire and its ruins is at its greatest in Southern Isaan. Around Buriram it is possible for groups to try their hand at silk and cotton weaving, and enjoy a gala dinner within the grounds of one of the local ruins. Pimai Historical Park also caters to large gala dinner events," she remarked.

"There is great capacity for

Isaan to grow as a MICE destination, with the Chinese market looking for experiential events and more authentic encounters. It has a developed infrastructure and plenty of accessibility throughout the region via LCCs."

However, responses among international MICE planners are more mixed.

Several of Khon Kaen's existing products will help to bring in clients, opined Henry Waltz of Germany-based Geck'o Incentives & Events. "There is a brewery... (and also an international) marathon, which is good for our clients who are runners; the textile industry is also good for our fashion corporates."

On the other hand, Yuji Wendler, managing director of Germany-based Teamtravel Premium, admitted to "not knowing the region at all", signalling the amount of work that is still needed to raise awareness of Isaan in order to bring it up to par with other designated MICE cities (Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Pattaya).



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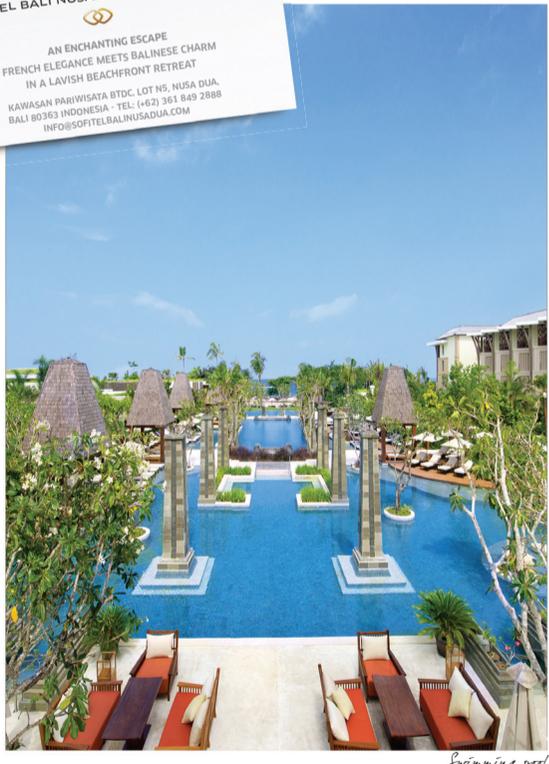
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Chic Outlet Shopping ups MICE game

By S Puvaneswary

FOLLOWING its strategy developed last year to capture more MICE business, Chic Outlet Shopping Villages has intensified efforts this year with many new services introduced.

Since Q2, each of its 10 Villages has had a dedicated MICE manager to tailor-make offerings for clients, such as greeting the group with welcome drinks, carving out space for corporates to hold product launches and presentations, as well as providing special workshops like cooking classes and wine tasting. These can also be combined with visits to nearby tourism attractions.

Operator Value Retail's head of MICE – global marketing, Marcelo Molinari, said the new initiatives are on top of existing ones such as private parking, VIP Cards with 10 per cent savings on purchases and customised F&B menus.

Additionally, in the days leading up to its participation at IT&CMA as exhibitor, Value Retail ran MICE workshops in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to provide training and product updates. This was the first time the company held such workshops, which were organised by Aviareps, the local representative in these three countries. The sessions were attended by over 50 MICE professional players from each city.

Last year, Chic Outlet Shopping Villages received over 40,000 MICE visitors, generating 15 million euros (US\$19.1 million) in sales, less than five per cent of total sales volume of all Chic Outlet Shopping Villages. This year, the

target is to hit 70,000 MICE visitors and 30 million euros in sales.

The biggest and fastest-growing market is China, followed by South-east Asia (led by Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore), South America (led by Brazil and Mexico), the Middle

East, (led by United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) and Europe.

Molinari said the biggest challenge is the lack of awareness of Chic Outlet Shopping Villages and its many special offerings for the MICE segment.

Hence, in 4Q2013, Chic Outlet Shop-

ping became a member of three MICE bodies, namely SITE, ICCA and MPI.

In May, the first Chic Outlet Shopping Village outside Europe opened in Suzhou, China. The second outlet in China, Shanghai Village, will open in June 2015.



Molinari: targeting big spenders

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{ Hot leads }

TMC wanted by Malaysia tech company

A Malaysia-based tech firm is seeking to connect with a TMC that can provide cost-effective integrated bookings for flights and hotels. The company has six executives who regularly travel within Asia-Pacific, mostly to South Korea, China and Japan, as well as India from next year. Email SK Chong, managing director of Swift Bridge Technologies at sk.chong@swiftbridgetechnologies.com. – Greg Lowe



US corporate travel manager keen on meeting airlines, hotels

Geetha Arekal, regional travel head APAC, 2nd vice president corporate travel at Northern Trust, is at IT&CMA for the first time representing the corporate travel department of the Chicago-based custodian bank, which has 85 offices around the world. She is looking to connect with hotels within the region as well as airlines, particularly those from the Philippines. Email ga23@ntrs.com. – Greg Lowe

Seeking HK, Phnom Penh groundhandlers

Malaysia-based MO Advertising & Events is looking for a groundhandler each in Hong Kong and Phnom Penh to handle a group of high achievers from an investment company based in Kuala Lumpur. Around 450 delegates will be travelling to Hong Kong for an incentive in November 2014. In January 2015, the same company will send 1,500 delegates to Phnom Penh for a convention and an incentive.

– S Puvaneswary

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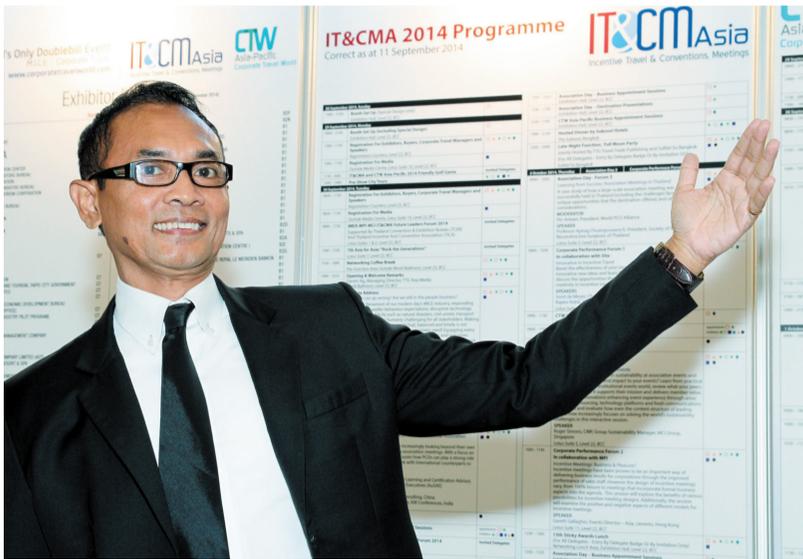
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Raising expectations

Hopes soar after Jokowi's win and his backing for the MICE sector. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

The MICE industry is showing signs of growth amid positive trade sentiments and heightened attention that Indonesian president-elect Joko Widodo has pledged to the sector.

From 8.8 million international arrivals last year, Indonesia is expecting the figure to reach 9.5 million in 2014. The Widodo presidency has set a target of 20 million foreign arrivals by 2020, of which international conferences are expected to play a big role.

Yanti Sukamdani, chairman of Indonesia Tourism Promotion Board, said: "Indonesia needs a quantum leap to reach (such huge targets). One of the ways to do is through boosting MICE and events."

Susilowani Daud, president director of Pacto Convex, said: "The meeting and exhibition industry in Indonesia has a bright future. A country with a 250 million population is a huge market for exhibitions and conferences."

Indra Sukirno, executive director of Jakarta Convention and Exhibition Bureau (JCNEB), said: "As the governor of Jakarta, Jokowi has set aside MICE budget (for the capital) this year, which has allowed JCNEB to participate at trade and road shows, bidding, delegate boosting and host city tours or dinners for international MICE participants in Jakarta."

Confirmed events for Jakarta next year include the Australian Institute of Company Directors Conference and the Asian Golf Tourism Convention, while the New Cities Summit 2015 is in the final bidding stages at press time.

International organisations like MCI Singapore has joined hands with Indonesia's Smiling Tour to launch MCI Indonesia in March this year.

Indonesia International Expo and Media Sinar Global have signed a contract with Deutsche Messe through its subsidiary Hannover Fairs International to operate Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE)



The incoming Jokowi administration has pledged support for the MICE sector

centre, which currently under construction in BSD City on Jakarta's outskirts. The 3.8 trillion rupiah (US\$317 million) ICE will become the biggest MICE facility in Indonesia, accommodating up to 10,000 people, when it opens in early 2015.

Despite earlier projections of a slow-down in MICE business this year due to the lack of high-profile events plus uncertainty surrounding the general and presidential elections, 1H performance fared better than expected and bookings for government and corporate meetings are up for the rest of the year, according to industry players.

Susilowani Daud, president director of Pacto Convex, said: "Unlike last year, Indonesia does not have huge events like

APEC Summit and WTO Ministerial Conference this year, but we have handled some 300 small conferences, seminars and trainings."

Danny Budiharto, operational director of Dyandra Media International, which operates the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center, said: "It turned out that there have been many corporate events with 400-500 participants; the rest of the year looks good too."

However, the future development of Indonesia's MICE industry is not without challenges. JCNEB's Indra remarked: "We need more quality PCOs to handle the incoming international businesses."

Rizki Handayani, director of MICE and Special Interest Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, added: "We need to expand the MICE destinations. We already have 16 to focus on, but not all of them are ready to host international events yet."

"Places like Medan and Surabaya should start to market themselves internationally (with their growing) accessibility and facilities for MICE, while Bandung and Jogjakarta should go regional."

153,933 The number of convention visitors to Indonesia in 2013

1,200 The spending of convention delegates, in US dollar, in 2013

Spotlight

Bintan's evolution

Since breaking ground in May 2008, Lagoi Bay has elevated the allure of Bintan Island with a raft of new resorts and attractions, including the Lagoi Beach Village Mall, Air Adventures, the 28-key Sanchaya and, most recently, the 196-key Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay. More resorts are underway in the destination.

Upping the anticipation factor further is a deal inked between Garuda Indonesia and Singapore-based Gallant Venture to develop a new international airport, located just 35 minutes from Lagoi Bay.

Bintan Island is currently served by Raja Haji Fisabilillah International Airport, located in Tanjung Pinang. The bulk of visitors arrive from Singapore via a 45-minute ferry connection.



Lagoi Bay's AdvenTreeZ canopy walk

The new airport has already garnered interest from LCCs, said Bintan Resorts International (BRI) marketing director, Asad Shiraz, who is hopeful that air links to regional countries such as India and China will soon be on the horizons.

"We also see the opening up of charter flights from Europe for this airport," he added. European markets such as the UK, France, Germany and, increasingly, Russia are significant for Bintan, comprising eight per cent of arrivals.

As development picks up pace, BRI is stepping up its marketing to the travel trade and consumers in selective markets. A series of roadshows and mini-travel marts to India, China and Indonesia, and sales calls to Japan and South Korea, are also planned. Segments targeted include weddings, MICE and school tours.

Marketplace

Courtyard by Marriott Bali Seminyak

Courtyard by Marriott Bali Seminyak has opened in August with 290 rooms and suites, marking the brand's second property in Bali after Courtyard Bali Nusa Dua.

Located in Seminyak, the five-star property offers a 308m² meeting space with three function rooms and breakout space with natural lighting beside the pool.

Complimentary Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel and guest rooms.



Sky

Ayana Resort and Spa has launched Sky, an ocean-front venue for corporate functions and events atop a private cliff.

Offering 180-degree ocean and sunset views, the 7,500m² multi-purpose venue boasts a cantilevered deck extending 3.5 meters out from the cliff.

Event organisers enjoy flexibility in set-up and layout at the venue, which can accommodate up to 1,000 guests for standing receptions supported by on-site facilities such as two outdoor reception lawns, a deck on the cliff's edge, an amphitheatre, a bridge that doubles as a stage, plus preparation villa for VIPs and event hosts.



Table8

The Mulia, Mulia Resort & Villas – Nusa Dua, Bali has launched Table8, a new Chinese restaurant serving authentic Cantonese and Szechuan delicacies, home-inspired cuisines and a tea corner with imported varieties of premium leaves from China.

Apart from Chinese buffet, signature dishes include Australian abalone braised with wild mushroom, roasted suckling pig and dim sum.

Open for lunch and dinner, the restaurant has a total capacity of 100 seats. For private functions, the private dining room – Ci Xi Suite – can accommodate 48 guests.

Borobudur Conference Centre

Hotel Borobudur Jakarta has recently opened the Borobudur Conference Centre, which boasts 12 meeting rooms equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and luxurious furnishings, adding to its existing 2,000-pax ballroom and 18 function rooms. Seating capacity of the new meeting rooms vary between six and 40 pax, while coffee break areas, both indoor and outdoor, provide a mix of healthy food and a wide selection of beverages.

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Jakarta - Diponegoro

Hilton Worldwide debuted its first DoubleTree brand in Indonesia with the recent opening of DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Jakarta – Diponegoro in Cikini, central Jakarta. The 253-key hotel has three dining outlets, an outdoor swimming pool, a kid's club, and 24-hour business and fitness centres. Meeting spaces include a ballroom, which can seat 700 pax in theatre style or 350 pax in banquet style, and six other breakout rooms which can accommodate between 50-120 pax.





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Greater ambitions

Manila's MICE prospects grow stronger on back of hotel, investment boom. By **Rosa Ocampo**

Unprecedented investments in modernising and expanding Manila's meetings and hotels facilities have bolstered the city's position as the undisputed MICE capital in the Philippines.

Unceasing investments in MICE infrastructure continues even as mega projects including SMX Convention Center Manila and SMX Taguig Convention Center, Mall of Asia Arena, three MICE-friendly integrated resorts, and international hospitality brands such as Marriott, Raffles, Fairmont and Marco Polo were built in recent years.

The investment boom has created several MICE hubs: along Manila Bay area, which has the biggest concentration of event venues and hotels; Resorts World Manila complex; Bonifacio Global City; Makati CBD; and Ortigas area.

With growing awareness of the destination and an influx of business tourism, MICE players are convinced that Manila will exceed its performance in 2013, during which the city was ranked 18th in Asia-Pacific and Middle East by ICCA for hosting 28 meetings last year.

There's "a new resurgence in MICE", said Dexter Deyto, vice president and general manager, SMX Convention Specialist Corp, whose flagship SMX Convention Centre Manila basks in a banner year for convention, meetings and exhibitions.

As more events move from other continents to Asia, "a growing number of international exhibition companies has started launching specialised trade shows in Manila and in SMX", Deyto said.

Local PCOs, meanwhile, are also launching their own international events to the benefit of Manila's MICE scene.

"This is a very good year especially for incentive travel; it's better than last," concurred Patty Escobal, Travel People tours

The Makati business district is one of several MICE hubs that have emerged in Manila in recent years



manager, who also handles MICE.

Even niche markets like incentive groups from India are becoming bigger in sizes and coming in series even though their numbers have not increased, observed Glen Agustin, chief tourism operations officer at the Department of Tourism. "It's a good sign that we are getting there and being considered as a destination for MICE," he said.

Angel Ramos Bognot, president and managing director of Afro-Asian Travel & Tours commented that "prospects are

promising", having recorded an uptick in meeting delegates from the niche Muslim market. Besides the World Economic Forum hosted in Manila in May, Afro-Asian Travel is also the groundhandler for the World Halal Forum taking place in December this year.

Noting the rosy outlook, Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) is intensifying its marketing and promotions not only in Asia where most MICE arrivals hail from, but also longhaul including Europe, said TPB CEO, Domingo Ramon Enerio III.

Enerio said TPB's support for MICE can include event hosting, airport reception and visa facilitation, coordinating with hotels, airlines and other travel suppliers for preferential rates.

Despite the boom, Manila, however, still faces some perennial challenges.

There is a lack of direct flights to Manila from abroad, while domestic flights to and from Manila can also be unstable. MICE planners share that even though they already include terminal fees for outbound flights, airfares are often more expensive due to fuel surcharge, other taxes and the need to travel by plane as the Philippines is an archipelago.

Another issue is the high hotel rates, not only in Manila but in other domestic destinations, at times even more expensive than other major Asian cities.

Manila's pricey rooms are the reason why a September incentive group from Indonesia eventually chose Vietnam over the Philippines, said Escobal.

"(Incentive groups) want to be in four- and five-star hotels in Makati. But even the lower-category hotels in Makati are still very expensive," she added.

Escobal said that in Manila, the most popular attractions for MICE groups are Greenhills where they can enjoy shopping, dining and nightlife; they also like touring nearby Tagaytay, Villa Escudero, Pagsanjan Falls and other attractions in Batangas, Laguna and Quezon.

With limited attractions and activities in Metro Manila, many MICE planners include at least one out of town pre- and post-convention destination. The eight major MICE destinations promoted by the TPB include Manila and its environs like Clark, Tagaytay, Laguna and Batangas or Cebu, Davao, Bohol, Boracay, Palawan, Baguio, Banawe, Vigan and Laoag.

3,700 The annual increase of new hotel rooms, on average, expected over the next three years.

53 The number of meetings hosted by the Philippines in 2013, according to ICCA

Marketplace



Blue Leaf Filipinas

Blue Leaf Filipinas in Aseana City comes across as a sophisticated and resort-like events venue with its Philippine architectural design elements and garden landscapes. It has three pavilions for up to 1,000 guests and three small function rooms for intimate events. Breakout halls are available for corporate requirements while the roof deck overlooking Manila Bay is ideal for cocktails.

Monochrome Events Place

Located in the Nuvali eco-community development in Santa Rosa, Laguna, the Monochrome Events Place offers 3,500m² of MICE space on four monochromatic pavilions right next to the Nuvali Lake. The first floor has a seating capacity for 740 pax and the second floor can accommodate 730 pax, plus a total of six event halls.

Seda Abreeza

The 189-room Seda Abreeza in Davao City has 10 fully equipped meeting and function rooms, with capacities ranging between 10 to 330 pax in addition to a gym, a swimming pool and an all-day dining restaurant. Shuttle service between the hotel and the SMX Convention Centre Davao can be easily arranged.

Spotlight

Dreaming of a new hotspot

The latest hotspot in town, City of Dreams Manila redefines luxury with its diverse array of leisure and lifestyle experiences spanning accommodation, entertainment, dining and shopping. (At press time, the destination is slated for an October opening).

Apart from extensive gaming facilities, the 6.2-ha integrated resort at Entertainment City along Manila Bay offers high-tech MICE venues and 981 rooms across three hotels: the six-star Crown Towers, the five-star Hyatt and lifestyle boutique Nobu Hotel.

Asia's first Nobu restaurant – inspired by chef Nobu Matsuhisa's fusion cuisine style – finds a home in the City of Dreams Manila, along with other world-renowned specialty, fine-dining and casual-dining outlets.

Fortune Egg, the dome-shaped landmark with dramatic lighting, will be home to two world-class nightclubs: Pangaea and Chaos. Acrobats and performers entertain along world-class deejays at Chaos which, with two levels over 3,000m², can accommodate over 2,000

clubbers.

For family entertainment, City of Dreams Manila also has DreamPlay, the first DreamWorks animation theme park in the world, featuring characters from DreamWork movies like *Madagascar*, *Shrek* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Completing the luxe offerings are premium shops offering high-end fashion labels, top-of-the-line beauty brands, exquisite jewellery, timepieces and accessories.





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Bangkok's top 10

Greg Lowe spills the beans on 10 hot spots in the capital city

1 Naamsah Bottling Trust Housed in a 100-year-old villa, which has been painted shocking pink, Naamsah Bottling Trust is celebrity chef Ian Kittichai's latest addition to Bangkok's dining scene. The restaurant serves Kittichai's personal take on classic Thai dishes and street cuisine, some of which have been combined with other cosmopolitan comfort foods, such as tacos and foie gras. The bar serves more than 30 kinds of cocktails. www.naamsah.com

6 Embassy Diplomat Screens Catch a movie at Bangkok's poshest cinema, Embassy Diplomat Screens, where cinephiles can choose from a host of seating options, from cocoons to day beds. The smallest theatre has just 31 seats. Other facilities include a bar, food from DEAN & DELUCA, headphones with private language choices, and a living room waiting area. Available for private bookings. www.embassycineplex.com

2 Peppina Paolo Vitaletti earned a reputation for serving some of Bangkok's best Italian food with the opening of Appia. His latest venture, Peppina, is already rated by some as being home to the city's best pizza. No pasta is served here but there are plenty of other Italian favourites and grilled meats, as well as a solid list of wines, craft beers and cocktails. Advance booking is strongly advised. www.facebook.com/peppinapizza

7 Tasting Thai food Get more out of your visit to Bangkok with a street-level culinary experience provided by Taste of Thailand Food Tours. The company specialises in taking small groups on foot around some of the Silom and Bangrak areas' best hawker stalls and shophouse restaurants as a means of providing visitors with an experiential wander through the city's culinary and architectural history. www.tasteofthailandfoodtours.com

3 Mikkeller Bangkok Situated in a former house and gardens off Ekkamai Road, Mikkeller Bangkok is the fourth addition to the Danish gypsy brewery's global bar footprint. Serving 30 craft beers on tap, with more in bottles, the bar boasts the country's best range of high-quality drafts, many of which are one-off creations from the master brewer. The taste-before-you-buy policy makes choosing more fun. www.mikkellerbangkok.com

8 Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives A great choice for those wanting some martial arts theatrics without the blood and gore, *Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives* is a highly choreographed performance detailing the 300-year history of Thailand's uncompromising martial art. The daily shows at 20.00 are held at Asiatique The Riverfront, the city's main riverside attraction. www.muaythailive.net

4 zuma Those seeking a chichi Japanese experience should head to zuma, which combines a restaurant, bar and lounge with private dining options. This international branded venue is located at The St. Regis Bangkok and is a favourite spot for the local glitterati. Chill and sip sake cocktails in the lounge, where music is provided by a local deejay, or opt to sit and dine on delectable sushi in relaxed surroundings. www.zumarestaurant.com

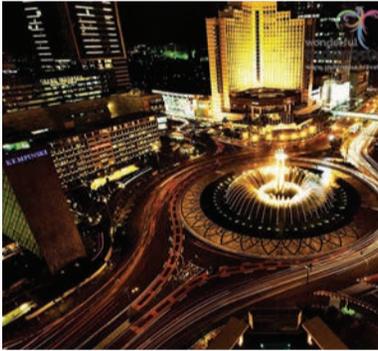
9 Spice Roads Cycle Chinatown Spice Roads' new Chinatown tour takes visitors on a pedal-powered excursion through the back alleys of the Yaowarat district before crossing the river to explore the smaller communities that have existed along the river banks for centuries. Stop-offs include the Portuguese church, Wat Arun and other sites. The trip takes about four hours, including breaks, and covers 15km. www.spiceroads.com

5 A R Sutton & Co Engineers Siam Ashley Sutton, the godfather of Bangkok cocktail bars, has outdone himself with his latest creation, A R Sutton Engineers & Co Siam, which, he says, combines colonial inspirations with a touch of black magic. The dark interiors sport plenty of exposed beams, red brick and polished metal. Drinks are design by the ubiquitous Joseph Boroski. www.facebook.com/A.R.Sutton.engineers

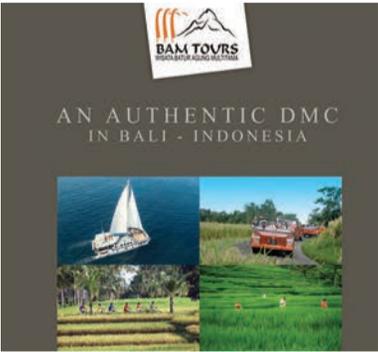
10 Muse Pass Anyone wanting to check out more than a couple of Bangkok's museums should purchase the Muse Pass ticket book which provides entry to 20 museums in the city and its environs for 199 baht (US\$6.20). Participating museums include Museum Siam, NSM Science Square, Siam House of Bizarre Creatures, Phaya Thai Palace, Bangkok Folk's Museum, Sam Sen Nai Philatelic Museum, King Prajadhipok Museum, Thai Film Museum, Science Museum and The Queen's Gallery. www.thaticketmajor.com



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Ideas 1, 2, 3

One-day city tour

The day begins at 08.00 with a Spice Roads Cycle Chinatown tour, which explores the historic Yaowarat area and riverside communities of Bangkok. The excursion ends with a 45-minute foot massage.

For lunch, head to Sheep Shank restaurant near Phra Ahtit pier, where exceptional modern American cuisine crafted by chef Somkiat Pairojmahakij is served.

Your group will have the afternoon to themselves.

Regroup in the evening for drinks at Mikkeller Bangkok, one of the four Danish gypsy breweries in the world, before proceeding to Supanniga Eating Room for dinner. The latter specialises in Eastern and Northeastern Thai cuisine. End the day with a nightcap at A R Sutton Engineers & Co Siam.



Supanniga Eating Room

Two-day teambuilding

Day 1 Kick off the day with a Bangkok Food Challenge. Your group will be split into teams and a Thai chef will show participants how to make three local dishes. The team is then given a crash course in Thai to help them purchase key ingredients and handle local transport. A set of flash cards denoting the ingredients and 1,000 baht of

spending money will be distributed before teams are sent off to secure all ingredients in under three hours. Points are awarded for the fastest time, greatest variety of transport used, most relevant posts on the activity on Facebook, etc.

The cook-off begins after lunch, and teams have 90 minutes to cook the three dishes from scratch.

Free time/coffee break is offered after this challenge.

Up next: Escape Hunt Bang-

kok. Teams will compete to solve a historical murder mystery challenge.

Your group will have the evening off to themselves.

Day 2 The day begins with surfing lessons and teambuilding games at Flow House Bangkok.

After lunch, your group will head to Healthland Asoke for a revitalising Thai massage.

Come evening, take on a cocktail mixology class from Flow Cocktail and compete with



Channel your inner Sherlock Holmes in a game with Escape Hunt Bangkok

one another to create the best libation.

End the two-day teambuilding programme over dinner and drinks at LB Terrace.

Three-day incentive

Friday After breakfast, depart for Wat Dhammakaya in Pathum Thani Province. This modern temple is quirky – its followers pay for the moulding and installation of a million Buddha images.

Next, head for Wat Pho, The Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew. Wat Pho is one of the city's oldest temples, the birthplace of traditional Thai massage, and home to a 15m high and 43m long reclining Buddha. Wat Phra Kaew and The Grand Palace are

two of the most important sites in Thailand, combining the former official residence of the Thai monarchy and the King's temple.

Lunch is served at The Deck at Arun Residence.

After filling the belly, travel by longtail boat to Baan Silapin Artist House and traditional Thai puppet performance. Tour the Thonburi canals after the show.

Your group will get free time in the afternoon, regrouping only at 17.30 for sundowner cocktails at Gler which affords excellent views of Chinatown, followed by dinner at Chyna.

The nights ends on a high note over drinks at the luxurious Sirocco, State Tower.

Saturday Do good today by visiting and making a donation to the Mercy Centre in Klong Toey, run by Father Joe Meier. The centre provides education for thousands of slum children through its network of schools and also runs an AIDS hospice for people from the community.

In place of lunch, embark on a Taste of Thailand food tour around the Bangrak area of Bangkok.

Regroup at 17.30 to explore

Asiatique The Riverfront. Dine at Baan Khanitha Thai restaurant, then catch the *Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives* show.

Sunday Tai Chi class in Lumpini Park comes optional. Your delegates may also choose to start the day later at 11.30 with Sunday Jazz Brunch at Trader Vic's at Anantara Riverside Bangkok.

The rest of the day is free for your group to do what they like.

Have a fun conclusion to the three-day incentive with cocktails at Mixo Bar, So Bangkok, and dinner at Nahm, Metropolitan Bangkok.

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The Venetian Macao has been the venue of choice for numerous large-scale business events



Magnet for big shows

New large-scale hardware is helping Macau to attract mega events. By **Prudence Lui**

Interest in Macau as a business events destination is on the rise this year, reported the tourism authorities and local industry players. According to Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO), its Incentive Travel Stimulation Program received 31 applications between January and July this year, 10 per cent more than the same period in 2013. These events were attended by 15,117 people, a rise of 14 per cent.

China, India, Hong Kong and Taiwan remain the strongest markets for the Incentive Travel Stimulation Program, noted MGTO.

The Venetian Macao, one of the largest hotel and event venue providers in the destination, saw a year-on-year event growth of 27 per cent in 1H2014, with delegate attendance exceeding 210,000 – up a whopping 100 per cent.

The venue's spokesman told the *Daily*: "This is testament to the change in destination perception, indicating that Macau is now considered the destination in Asia for both small and large-scale city-wide events."

The spokesperson added that the opening of the 6,000-key Sands Cotai Central in 2012 and the overall infrastructure on the Cotai Strip have boosted Macau's status as a city for mega meet-

ings and events.

In July, Macau welcomed a mega incentive group comprising 3,500 management personnel and elite members of Flight Centre Travel Group from Australia and the US. Participants took part in meetings and teambuilding activities.

In September alone The Venetian Macao played host to two massive events with more than 10,000 attendees each – one being the HERBALIFE Active World Team University 2014 and the other, the Jeunesse Expo Annual World Conference.

Simon Leung, general manager of Macau MICE Travel of Shun Tak Travel Services, has also observed a leap in the size of events coming into Macau. "In the past we would see groups of 3,000 pax. Today, that has grown to 10,000 to 20,000," he said.

Bruno Simões, director at smallWORLD Entertainment, noted that Macau's MICE performance has been "improving year after year".

While he credited the Macau government subsidies for event planners for the rise in MICE business, he said a simplifica-

tion in application processes would help.

"The number of documents and the time needed to process applications and final reports are excessive," he lamented.

To further raise Macau's appeal as a business event destination, Simões urged the government to improve the arrival experience at maritime terminals and borders as well as access to historical and unique venues for private events.

Meanwhile, MGTO is shoring up Hong Kong arrivals with its *Surprise Macau* campaign, launched in August.

Stanley Mok, general manager of MGTO, remarked that the influx of Chinese visitors in recent times has rendered Macau less attractive to visitors from Hong Kong, as the latter prefers less crowded destinations. Hong Kong arrivals from January to July dipped 6.1 per cent.

To bring this market back, *Surprise Macau* will disseminate information on the latest tourism statistics, hotels and development projects, major events, trails and summer highlights in the territory.

– *Additional reporting by Yvonne Chang*

276 The number of events hosted in Macau in 1Q2014, drawing 304,272 participants. According to the Department of Statistics and Census, there has been a year-on-year growth of 46 per cent in event count and 50 per cent in attendee numbers

Spotlight

A unique gallery

The 325m² Macpro Gallery opened this February in the downtown Central district of Macau Peninsula, offering event planners a new off-site venue option.

The venue occupies the second floor of a commercial complex and had undergone a year-long renovation to become the multipurpose space it is today. A picture-hanging system, various lighting modes, professional audio equipment recording system, projector and Wi-Fi access are all provided, allowing Macpro Gallery to meet the needs of a variety of events.

Macpro Gallery is joined by Macpro Business Centre on the 27th floor of the same building, a venue that offers 13 serviced offices and two meeting rooms that can accommodate three and 50 pax respectively.

Macpro Gallery director of business development, Anita Ao, noted that event planners were always looking for fresh venues to enthrall their delegates.

"Macpro Gallery offers a cool alternative in the heart of the Macau Peninsula. Event planners may integrate their event, for instance, with a walk around the UNESCO World Heritage Centre of old Macau," said Ao.

She added that Macpro Gallery also appeals to event planners who want to use a "neutral venue that is independent of a gaming environment".

MacPro Gallery looks to host exhibitions, tradeshows, seminars, workshops and cocktail receptions for 200 pax, as well as cooking demonstrations and fashion shows. It is also keen to support Macau's art, cultural and creative industries through venue rental for related exhibitions.

Visit www.macprogallery.com or email info@macprogallery.com for more information. – **Prudence Lui**



Marketplace

Grand Coloane Beach Resort

The Westin Resort Macau has been rebranded Grand Coloane Beach Resort, following the end of the property's licensing agreement with Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Grand Coloane Beach Resort will continue to offer conference and event venues, corporate team-building activities and other guest facilities.



Plaza Premium Lounge

Macau International Airport has opened a Plaza Premium Lounge with 130 seats and an offering of healthy food options for travellers. Complimentary Wi-Fi connection is also provided.

It is said to be the only independent airport lounge in the destination.



MGM Macau

A number of new technology-driven features have been rolled out at MGM Macau. Guests can now enjoy complimentary Wi-Fi with a one-time registration as well as quick and easy keycard update for stay extensions, through a new RFID lock system which allows front office staff to make the change remotely.

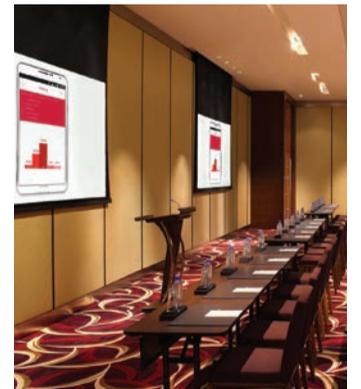
Guestrooms now also feature the latest generation flatscreen TV which comes with high-definition channels and supports Miracast screen-casting standard which uses Wi-Fi to echo display from the guest's mobile device onto the TV.

Grand Hyatt Macau

Grand Hyatt Macau has launched the Events App, allowing organisers and delegates to log-in to specific events to securely access daily agendas.

Available for iOS and Android devices, the new app can provide organiser, speaker or exhibitor profiles, answers to frequently asked questions, session requirements and other background information such as detailed venue floor plans and directions. Delegates can also view event photos, video content and uploaded documents, interact via private inbox messaging and social media, and discover what's happening around the hotel and the City of Dreams.

Meanwhile, organisers can manage live delegate polling of



each session and receive real-time results in graph format, communicate with delegates via instant push notifications, and conduct post-event surveys to evaluate ratings and feedback from participants.

Checking into CentralWorld

By Patrick Tan



MO Advertising Malaysia's Alex Wong and Sama-Sama Hotel Malaysia's Sharon Wong



Allied Telesis EMENA Austria's Wanna Binder



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