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IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific
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Visit Philippines 2015 to bring more domestic, inbound MICE

By Greg Lowe

INTERNATIONAL and domestic buyers are organising more MICE activities in the Philippines, especially incentives, as the Tourism Promotion Board (TPB) gears up for a major destination marketing campaign next year.

A major MICE campaign will be launched as part of *Visit Philippines Year 2015*, which has seen increased investment in tourism infrastructure and meetings facilities in the run-up to it.

Unable to disclose more details, Karem Miranda, senior project office for the NTO's MICE and business development unit, said: "We will be doing more to capture the local corporate market and have more groups holding their events within the country."

Buyers said the destination already has high-standard meetings facilities, though more properties and integrated resorts, including Aseana City in Manila, are due to come online between now and 2017,

enabling the conferences and exhibitions segment to develop further.

Joyce Weir, director of Joyce Weir Associates Sydney, said: "The hotels (in the Philippines) are fabulous, and they have terrific meetings facilities and great offsite venues."

Marketing campaigns in Australia have also helped strengthen the country's reputation among MICE planners, she added.

In addition, the country is getting increasingly popular in some longhaul markets where clients are seeking new experiences in South-east Asia beyond more established destinations.

"Our incentive and corporate clients are looking for something new," said Joanna Jablonska, sales and marketing manager, Active Zone Poland. "Many have already been to Thailand, Vietnam or Cambodia, and they are now looking at the Philippines."

She added that the country's abundance of natural attractions

and beachfront resorts is a big draw for incentive groups. "Typically our longhaul groups only want a half-day meeting during the whole incentive, and they seek something non-traditional, like having a meeting on a beach."

Leszek Narowski, sales director, ATP Activity Poland, also said the company is keen on incentives at Puerto Princessa in Palawan. "The Philippines is new for us, but in Poland there is currently very little competition for the destination compared with other regional destinations."

DMCs are also reporting an upsurge in forward bookings for the Philippines.

The bulk is inbound incentive groups, said Roel Privado, sales and marketing director, Sharp Travel Service, adding that the NTO's aggressive marketing campaigns are already producing results. "We are winning back market share for international MICE business, having already confirmed conventions and congresses for the next two years, both in Manila and Cebu," he shared.



Miranda: new MICE campaign

TCEB expands campaign

By Greg Lowe

THAILAND Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) yesterday launched at IT&CMA its US\$3 million *Thailand Connect the World Campaign* for 2015.

The campaign, which leverages last year's *Thailand Connect* campaign, is now global. However, the bureau will first focus on Asian markets, which currently account for about 70 per cent of MICE visitors to the country, followed by Europe and the US, said Vichaya Soonthornsaratoon, director of meetings, incentives and conventions.

"We are continuing with our incentives for MICE planners (until end-2015)," she said. "These include Meetings Bonus, which provides VIP treatment for delegates and

financial incentives on top of our other incentives for group sizes of more than 200, 500 and 1,000 delegates."

The Mega Events...Sustainable Challenge incentive also provides additional support of one million baht (US\$30,800) for groups of 1,000 pax up.

"We are also providing PR and marketing support for mega events, but this will be decided on a case-by-case basis," she said.

The bureau is targeting more than one million MICE visitors next year, up 17 per cent on the forecast for fiscal year 2014. These would hopefully generate spending of US\$3.6 billion, up 22 per cent from this year's target of US\$2.9 billion. TCEB's fiscal year runs from October to September.

Rwanda muscles up, aims for top 10 ranking within Africa

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

RWANDA is preparing to welcome its first convention centre next year, hot on the heels of the establishment of the Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB) in May.

Billed as the largest in East and Central Africa, the US\$300 million Kigali Convention Centre – a facility that will have a five-star hotel with 292 rooms, a conference hall for 2,600 people and an IT park – marks an unprecedented standard for MICE in the country.

Aiming to diversify its tourism experiences beyond

gorillas, Rwanda is also seeking investors for spa and golf resort hotels along Lake Kivu, and a cable car system on the slopes of the Volcanoes National Park. In addition, a new cultural village will be set up in Kigali.

Rwanda's share of MICE business within the continent is presently minimal. According to ICCA's latest statistics, Rwanda is ranked 21st, a result that RCB wants to change by gunning for the top 10 by 2016.

To reassure the trade that Rwanda remains Ebola-free, RCB also issued a statement on Sunday.

Leveraging tech for corporate travel safety

CORPORATE travel managers are seeing a "refinement" of travel policies in the wake of high-profile travel accidents and health scares, say participants at CTW Asia-Pacific 2014.

At the same time, popular social media platforms such as Facebook

are being touted as one possible way for companies to keep track of their travellers in the event of security crises. – Hannah Koh

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Le Méridien Suvarnabhumi Bangkok tees off

A DEVIATION from the traditional inner city or riverside location, Le Méridien Suvarnabhumi, Bangkok Golf Resort & Spa will open in the capital's eastern suburbs in November.

General manager Martin Wuethrich said: "There is huge potential for MICE events...the resort is near BITEC convention centre, Suvarnabhumi Airport and offers direct highway connectivity to (Thailand's) Eastern Seaboard."

There will be 223 rooms, a ballroom, 10 meeting rooms, three F&B outlets, a fitness centre, an outdoor swimming pool and a spa.

Wuethrich shared: "We are working with Thailand Incentive and Convention Association and DMCs (for marketing), plus organising fam trips."

The resort is offering an introductory promotion with rates from 3,666 baht (US\$113) including breakfast, when booked with a full-day meeting package priced at 1,500 baht per delegate, valid from November 16, 2014 to April 15, 2015. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

New travel tradeshow for India

By S Puvaneswary

FORMED just slightly more than a year ago, the Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has managed to garner the support of the government to launch a new B2B MICE and leisure show in India from April 23 to 25, 2015.

Sarab Jit Singh, vice chairman of FAITH, said the federation would be jointly organising the inaugural event with two key ministries, namely the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Commerce.

While the name and location of the tradeshow has yet to be determined, Sarab added FAITH will be responsible for the sourcing of buyers for the show.

The federation is also trying to bring together all foreign airlines that fly to India to look at marketing India collectively as a tourism destination, and to see how best it can partner with the airlines for the show.

In addition, Sarab said the federation has been providing support to local associations bringing international events to the country, by liaising with

the relevant authorities for cargo clearance, airport facilitation, and other needs they may have.

It has also helped to reduce the bureaucracy that foreign companies would otherwise face in attracting exhibitions and corporate events to India,

"We are sourcing for buyers of India's first B2B MICE and leisure show co-organised by the tourism and commerce ministries in April 2015."

Sarab Jit Singh

Vice chairman, Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality

acting as a facilitator to ensure the smooth running of their events.

As well, the federation has brought to the attention of the government the poor conditions of the highways connecting New Delhi and Jaipur,

Bengaluru and Mysore, as well as Hampi and Goa. As a result, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has given the word that the roads will be improved.

The much-awaited e-visa facility, expected to kick off in December for citizens of 40 countries, was also championed by FAITH, which presented a paper to the Ministry of Tourism last year explaining the good foreign exchange earnings India will gain should the facility be implemented. Phase two of the move will see the facility extended to 109 countries in the near future.

FAITH comprises 10 associations throughout India. They are: Travel Agents Association of India; Indian Association of Tour Operators; Travel Agents Federation of India; Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India; Adventure Tour Operators Association of India; Indian Tourist Transporters Association; Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India; India Convention Promotion Bureau; Indian Heritage Hotels Association; and Hotel Association of India.

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{ In brief }

Greater CSR interest from Asian corporates for Laguna Phuket

Integrated destination Laguna Phuket is reaping benefits from its focus on CSR, which is becoming an important criterion for planners selecting a venue for their events, according to the resort's executives.

"Research shows that 60 per cent are more likely to choose products and services that give back to society," commented

Prae Sunantaraks, director of community relations, Laguna Resorts & Hotels. "Clients nowadays have high expectations, they are seeking more than just a good venue."

Ravi Chandran, senior vice president and managing director of Laguna Phuket Resorts & Hotels, Laguna Lang Co Vietnam and spa operations, elaborated: "During the past few years, we've been receiving questions from the industry and potential MICE clients, especially from Australia, on whether we do CSR. It seems to us that CSR is not a trend or business acumen, it is becoming a

prerequisite for businesses seeking partners, suppliers and service providers."

When enquired by the *Daily* about CSR adoption among corporates across the world, he remarked: "Interestingly, we are not seeing the same amount of traction for CSR adoption with Western companies; it's the Asian companies who are more interested."

Citing tightened belts among Western companies as a possibility for the muted interest, Chandran added: "Perhaps we have concentrated far too much on the Asian region since 2009 after the financial crisis,

so our CSR image may not be as strong in Western countries."

The destination has since stepped up its marketing campaign in Europe, with most of the resort's general managers attending WTM London "to get us back on the map", he added.

In addition, Laguna Phuket will be kicking off the Seedings Social Enterprise Restaurant project, an 18-month skills training and internship programme for disadvantaged and marginalised local youth. The restaurant is set to open by mid-2015. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

Johor CVB raises game

By S Puvaneswary

THE formation of a new CVB in Johor, the southern-most state of Peninsular Malaysia, has won the plaudits of buyers and sellers at IT&CMA, who see potential in combination itineraries that include neighbouring Singapore.

Anmol Ratan Bakshi, senior advisor at Legris India, said his company has organised many conferences in Singapore and Thailand but never in Malaysia. He added: "People like to explore a new place, and with a bureau in place, we will be able to easily find out more about what the destination has to offer in terms of accommodation and meeting facilities. The cost of holding an event also plays a big role in choosing a destination. We would not mind twinning Singapore with Johor, combining a conference and sightseeing programmes."

Noor M Ismail, head, sales & marketing at Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel, said: "For the South-east Asian markets, India, China and the Middle East, Johor provides added value when packaged with Singapore, as meetings and tours in Johor are more affordable. Having new international brands such as the recently opened DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Johor Bahru (in Johor's capital city) will also help draw delegates to the destination."

Zulkefli Sharif, CEO, Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, said the state bureau, which will be set up in 2016, will complement the efforts of the federal CVB in bidding for more international events. He explained: "A bureau will also be able to inform and update meeting planners, incentive houses and all MICE players on the state's meeting capacities, attractions and strengths as a MICE destination."

Johor will be the third secondary destination in Malaysia to have a CVB, after Sarawak in East Malaysia and Penang in the north.

K Nirubah, director of sales and marketing for Persada Johor International Convention Center Johor Bahru and The Puteri Pacific Johor Bahru, welcomed the additional marketing resources. She said: "With a bureau, we can market the destination more effectively and will have a better presence at MICE shows. One of our biggest challenges is that we have not been able to get through to foreign meeting planners and incentive players due to a lack of awareness of the destination."

Edward Kollmer, general manager, Thistle Hotel Johor Bahru, added: "In December 2012, Johor Bahru hosted the 8th World Islamic Economic Forum (which attracted 2,100 delegates from 86 countries). This proves that Johor Bahru can deliver an excellent event and be a prime MICE destination in the future."

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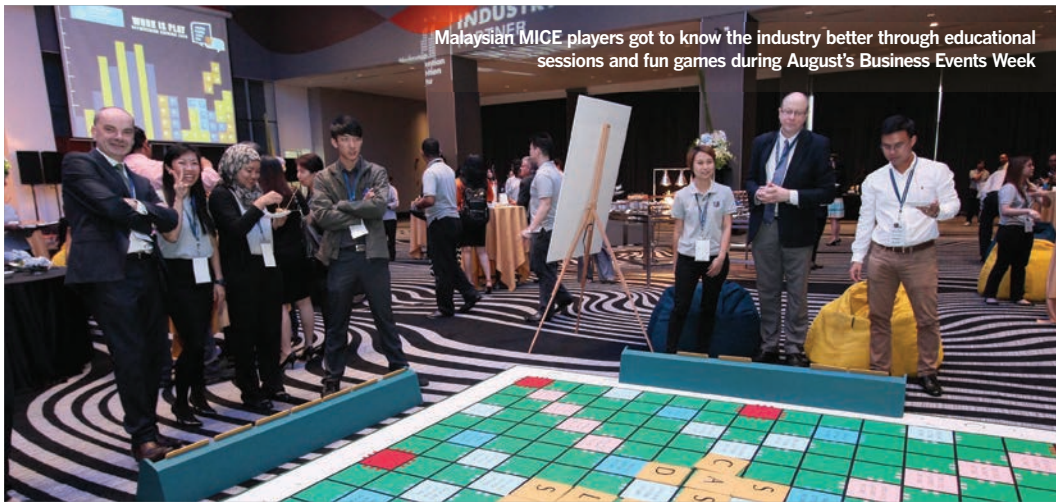
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Better airlinks lift Indian figures

Indian meetings, incentives are up, while MyCEB continues to invest in industry development. By **S Puvaneswary**



Malaysian MICE players got to know the industry better through educational sessions and fun games during August's Business Events Week

Malaysian trade players have reported an increase in business events this year from India, and to a smaller degree, from Europe.

Destination management companies specialising in the Indian market credited improved air connections between India and Malaysia for the marked improvement in meetings and incentives.

Luxury Tours Malaysia saw a 30 per cent year-on-year jump in Indian incentives, noted senior

manager Arokia Das.

"Malindo Air's new flights from Mumbai, Delhi, Trichy and Kochy have helped a lot. Also, we have the most competitive hotel rates in South-east Asia and Indian organisers know they can get more for their money here compared with neighbouring destinations," said Das, adding that similar cultures, cuisine and close proximity to India round up Malaysia's attractiveness as an incentive destination.

Noor M Ismail, head of sales & marketing, Asian Overland Services Conventions & Events,

added that with improved air links today, it is possible for 200 delegates from three Indian cities, for example Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, to arrive on the same day on different flights and for everyone to depart on the same day too. The company has seen a five to 10 per cent increase in incentive business.

Meanwhile, Noor said incentive business from Europe had risen slightly this year despite a sluggish economy there. He attributed the increase to the company's continuous market-

1.35 The number of business event arrivals into Malaysia in 2013, which translates to 5.2 per cent of the country's total tourist arrivals

35 The position Malaysia holds in ICCA's 2013 world rankings of top meeting cities. It hosted 117 association meetings. In 2012, Malaysia ranked 35th spot for hosting 109 association meetings

ing efforts at MICE tradeshows in Europe.

Saini Vermeulen, head of international sales at Panorama Tours Malaysia, has noticed a 20 per cent increase in incentive business from Eastern Europe, specifically from Hungary and Poland. These groups would usually combine Malaysia with Singapore and/or Thailand, spending a total of 10 days in this region, of which five days would be spent in Malaysia. Places of interest included Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Malacca, Penang and Langkawi.

In 1H2014 alone, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre hosted eight high profile international events which attracted close to 30,000 delegates.

Not one to rest on its laurels, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) extended its Malaysia Twin Deal programme, which rewards

corporate meeting and incentive planners and their delegates when they head to Malaysia for events. To qualify, the group must comprise at least 50 delegates from outside of Malaysia, and bookings and arrivals must be made by December 31, 2014.

This programme was initially due to expire on June 30.

MyCEB also debuted the Business Events Week in August to expose local industry players to key insights, challenges and growth opportunities in the business events arena. The programme comprised seminars led by international industry experts, workshops, dialogue sessions and networking opportunities.

These efforts are in line with Malaysia's goal to lure 2.9 million business event arrivals by 2020 to make up eight per cent of the 36 million targeted tourist arrivals.

Spotlight

Setia City Convention Centre sets sights on regional business

Less than two years since it first opened its doors, Setia City Convention Centre is expanding its focus from the domestic market to regional business.

Convention centre head, Francis Teo, said the convention centre is working with DMCs, PCOs and event management companies to attract more regional business.

"We're targeting regional meeting organisers who are looking for a venue away from the traffic and distractions in the capital city, and yet, providing easy access to the city with good roads and highways," said Teo.

Its location, just off the New Klang Valley Expressway in Shah Alam, means the townships of Subang Jaya, Shah Alam, and Klang are all within

a 15-minute drive. Setia is also within a 45-minute drive to Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

The two-storey convention centre was launched in 2012 but opened to public bookings only last year, with an inventory consisting of a pillarless ballroom that can be divided into three smaller spaces, eight meeting rooms including two that can accommodate up to 200 pax in theatre-style, three VIP rooms, and three audiovisual rooms that can double up as interpretation booths. A manicured lawn with water features and a gazebo makes a good option for outdoor dinners and teambuilding activities.

The convention centre will also appeal to environmentally conscious companies, as it

boasts eco-friendly capabilities such as rainwater harvesting, solar panning to generate electricity, and 21 parking bays with chargers for electric cars.

Said Teo: "We provide a venue option for companies wishing to minimise their impact on the environment and their carbon footprint."

Recent corporate events hosted at Setia City Convention Centre included the 1,500-pax AIA Regional Life Planners Congress, and 500-pax GD Express regional conference – both held in September.

It has also secured an annual convention by real estate company Reapfield, which will be held in March 2015 for 500 delegates from across the South-east Asia region.



Marketplace



The Blue Mansion

Hospitality and restaurant group Samadhi Retreats has signed a long-term management agreement to brand and manage The Blue Mansion, A Cheong Fatt Tze Legacy.

The boutique hotel is one of three heritage buildings in Penang, Malaysia to have won awards from UNESCO. It was built by renowned Chinese tycoon Cheong Fatt Tze just before the turn of the 20th century.

Under the helm of Samadhi Retreats, The Blue Mansion's 18 rooms have been restored to reflect the tycoon's opulent lifestyle. Each room is individually themed and furnished with luxurious amenities alongside precious heirlooms from the family's private collection.

A new addition to The Blue Mansion is the Cheong Fatt Tze Restaurant, serving modern Cantonese cuisine. Other facilities include a swimming pool surrounded by Chinese gardens, and a Samadhi Spa.

The entire property can be hired for groups of 100 pax.

Els Club Teluk Datai

This 18-hole championship golf course opened for play in May, offering access to both the public and guests of The Datai Langkawi. The club has partnerships with various hotels in Langkawi and golf packages are readily available for guests desiring a round on the greens. The Els Club Teluk Datai boasts a spectacular landscape, thanks to the Machincang mountain range and the turquoise waters of the Andaman Sea.

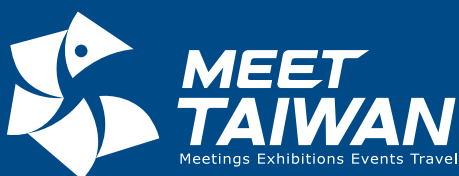
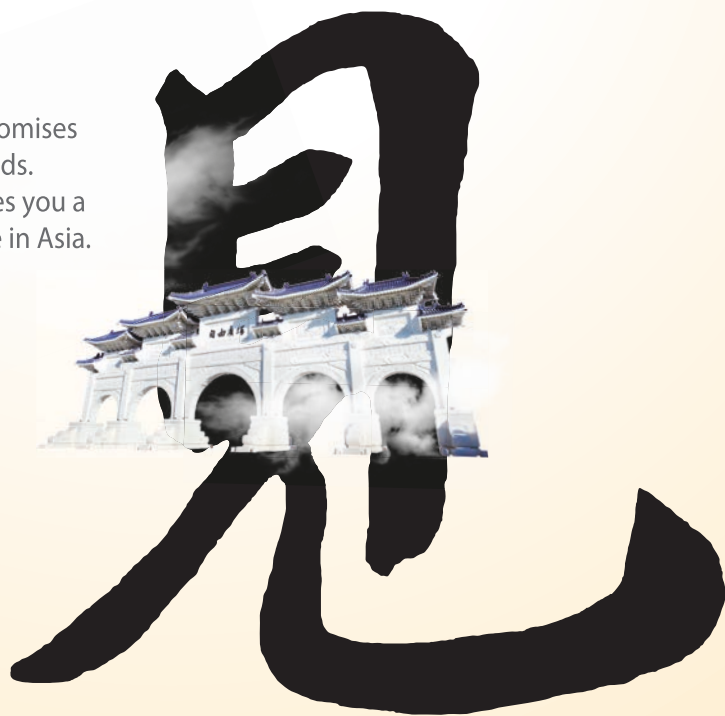
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Tale of two key cities

MICE business is climbing for Shanghai, while Beijing is expected to have better days ahead after hosting the APEC Leaders' Summit next month, writes **Caroline Boey**

The latest annual ranking reports by ICCA placed China in eighth spot on the top-20 country list for hosting 340 international association meetings in 2013. China's top two cities were Beijing, with 105 meetings, and Shanghai with 72 meetings, and they were placed 18th and 29th respectively in the global city rankings.

Beijing's 2013 performance dropped from the 109 meetings the previous year, while Shanghai improved on the 64 meetings it hosted in 2012.

Commenting on Shanghai's performance, Patrick Chen, deputy director, Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration (SMTA), International Tourism Promotion Department, said: "It's not only international association meetings that come to Shanghai. The biggest and strongest segment is corporate meetings, and Shanghai will become even more vibrant because of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free-Trade Zone and more investments coming into the city."

Susan Wu, vice president of sales and marketing for Interstate China Hotels & Resorts, reported business events for the group's Shanghai and Beijing hotels rose 2.2 per cent from January to July this year compared to the same period in 2013.

"Shanghai was up, but Beijing was down. According to Q2 2014 Global Hotel Trends, the overall RevPar of Beijing in Q2 decreased four per cent, and the overall RevPar of Shanghai in Q2 increased 7.2 per cent.

"Government policy limiting government expenditure in star-rated hotels has had a bigger impact in Beijing than in Shanghai, which has benefited from the Free-Trade Zone, and is attracting more business meetings to the city," she added.

Interstate China Hotel & Resorts manages the 373-room Chang An Grand Hotel Beijing, the 850-room DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Shanghai-Pudong, and the 201-room CITIC Pacific Zhujiajiao Jin Jiang Hotel.

Ascott Huai Hai Road Shanghai's residence manager, Inka Uusitalo-Raoult, noted that 2014 will end up as the best year so far, but said growth is likely to



Shanghai's Free-Trade Zone and influx of investments have made it a magnet for corporate meetings

slow down in the coming year.

"Although many Fortune 500 companies have set up their Asia-Pacific headquarters here and more corporate travellers are familiar with serviced residence as another accommodation option, the market for serviced residences has matured," she noted.

But overall, the sentiment in Shanghai is upbeat. James Zheng, vice director, Shanghai International Conference Management Organization (SICMO), said: "We have been receiving more RFPs than ever before since the beginning of 2013."

SICMO is Shanghai's tourism and convention promotion centre under SMTA.

Zheng continued: "As a result of Shanghai hosting the 52nd ICCA Annual Congress in November 2013, many foreign PCOs and meetings service suppliers are now looking at Shanghai for their future events."

International conferences which have selected Shanghai include the 11th World Design & Health Assembly, the 7th Asian Tumor Summit & Viral Hepatitis Conference, the 9th International Air Transport Association Freight Conference, the 2016 Urban Future Convention, the 2016 Jeunesse Convention, and 2020 Global Endometriosis Conference.

"The fact that these events are to be held in Shanghai shows the positive effect of the Shanghai ICCA Annual Congress in promoting the city, expanding its appeal in the international conference market, and attracting more international conferences," he noted.

Also optimistic that the Chinese capital will be in demand is Den Ferdinand V Navarro, director of sales and marketing, Sheraton Beijing Dongcheng Hotel.

The hotel opened in October 2011 and business events contribute 20 to 30 per cent of total business, of that more than half are domestic events.

Navarro said: "We are expecting more business events because the hotel has one of the largest inventories of meeting space, 2,400m² in all, in north-east Beijing and is close to three major exhibition venues. The world wants to trade with China, and Beijing as a political and business centre, will remain an important destination."

He believes that Beijing's hosting of the 2014 APEC Leaders' Summit in November will strengthen the destination's position as a global venue for high-end events and boost business.

Beijing's 2013 MICE statistics are not available at press time.

Marketplace

Traditional Chinese Medicine healthcare tours

The Beijing Convention & Visitors Bureau has launched a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) healthcare programme that offers opportunities for business event delegates to practise tai chi on the Great Wall, experience martial arts in Ditan Park, have a TCM massage or acupuncture, dine on herbal cuisine, and visit TCM hospitals and related attractions.

Millennium Resort Hangzhou

The 151-room Millennium Resort Hangzhou, which opened in 2Q2014, is the first Millennium & Copthorne resort to open in China.

Nestled among tea plantations and ancient forests, the resort offers a 400m² ballroom that can cater for up to 280 people, as well as four smaller function rooms for events and meetings.

Besides an all-day dining restaurant, there are seven private dining rooms, authentic Longjing tea service, and a large bar with live music.

New World Beijing

The 309-room New World Beijing, which opened in November 2013, is the first international deluxe flag to be planted in Chongwenmen, one of Beijing's fastest growing commercial areas.

The hotel offers a grand ballroom for up to 380 pax for a banquet and seven function rooms for smaller events.

Chongwenmen metro station is a 10-minute walk away, and the CBD is 15 minutes away by taxi.



River Mall

The former Expo Axis at the main entrance of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo site, has reopened as a four-storey shopping mall. Its collection of retail shops, restaurants and a Polymax theatre adds buzz to the area which is populated by the China Art Museum and the Mercedes-Benz Arena.

Metro Line 8, which goes to the China Art Museum station, connects visitors to the River Mall.

Spotlight

Shanghai's MICE appeal gets a massive booster shot

All eyes are on Shanghai's new mega National Convention and Exhibition Center (NCEC) which comprises exhibition halls, convention facilities, event spaces, a commercial centre, an office building, and a five-star hotel.

While the exhibition halls in the North Building were put to use last month, the remaining halls will only be ready for business in March 2015. The whole complex is scheduled to officially open in June 2015.

Also referred to as China Expo

Complex, NCEC is billed as the world's largest single building in terms of size – it spans 1.47 million square metres in total. It offers about 400,000m² of indoor and 100,000m² of outdoor exhibition space, 200,000m² of usable exhibition auxiliary facilities and another 300,000m² of comprehensive supporting facilities.

The indoor exhibition space includes 13 large (28,800m² each) and three small (10,000m² each) halls, all of which are accessible by freight carriers.

There are more than 60 meeting rooms at NCEC with seating capacity ranging from less than a hundred people to 3,000 pax.

Located 1.5km from the Hongqiao Transportation Hub, NCEC is connected to Hongqiao Airport and Hongqiao Railway Station via the city's Metro Line 2, and is between one and two hours' drive from the major cities in the Yangtze River Delta.

NCEC, jointly built by the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Shanghai Municipal

Government, is operated by the Shanghai Exhibition Co, which is also an investor.

Facilities at the massive venue are linked by an eight-metre high elevated pedestrian walkway.

The commercial centre, situated in the middle of the complex and with direct access to the exhibition halls and metro lines, houses meeting rooms, VIP lounges, an information desk, as well as F&B, entertainment and retail outlets.

According to a spokesperson

at NCEC, its sheer size will have an impact on the scale of international and domestic events held at the complex, as well as become a new business and lifestyle hub.

Its opening is expected to be a major driver for Shanghai's growth into an international trade centre, facilitate in China's economic restructuring, and be the platform for international exchange and "win-win business development between China and the world". – **Caroline Boey**



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13 top incentive ideas

From swimming with sea giants in one of the world's best conserved dive spots to a lesson on the art of cooking with a celebrity chef, we hunt down some of the world's most interesting travel ideas to reward your top achievers with



1

1 Explore an almost-perfect reef

The diving community won't like what we are about to tell you now. Pulau Tenggol, a small island in the South China Sea and part of Malaysia's Terengganu Marine Park, is regarded as a well-kept secret among avid divers. The reef here is in almost-perfect condition and for people in the know, it is considered the best diving spot in Peninsular Malaysia.

Take your incentive winners on an educational dive around Pulau Tenggol, with the luxurious Tanjong Jara Resort as their base. The resort has its own dive centre and will provide expert guides, dive masters and PADI dive instructors to accompany groups on each dive.

Capacity 14 to 12 pax
Email travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my
Website www.tanjongjararesort.com

2 Camp in luxury in the great Australian outback

Situated at Yulara, close to the border of World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Longitude 131 is touted as one of the best luxury wilderness camps in the world. With 15 luxury tents, Longitude 131 caters for those seeking an exclusive and unique outback experience. Your top achievers will enjoy five-star comfort and private views of Uluru and Ayers Rock.

Capacity Maximum of 30 pax
Email reception@longitude131.com.au
Website <http://longitude131.com.au/>

3 Go deep sea fishing

This four-hour adventure begins right after breakfast. Your top achievers will set sail on the 27-foot *Coast Craft* catamaran, said to be the best boat for Gulf waters, and try their hand at sport fishing under the guidance of an experienced captain.

The *Coast Craft* is comfortably furnished with a canopy and cushioned seats, and equipped with four trawling fishing rods and eight bottom-fishing lines. Bait is provided. Refreshments are served on board to keep participants hydrated and energised.

Alpha Tours Dubai, which arranges this programme, can provide two to four boats for each group.

Capacity 12 to 48 pax
Email mice@alphatoursdubai.com
Website www.alphatoursdubai.com

4 Into the wild

Spend the night in the middle of the remote Cambodian hinterland, deep in the jungle beside the thousand-year-old temple of Preah Khan Kompong Svay.

The HG Travel team will set up a luxury camp with all facilities, including a safari-style living tent with bathroom and showers, a lounge and dining area near the temple, which, when candle-lit in the evenings, paints an unforgettable picture straight from the pages of the wildest imagination.

Nothing bonds a team as much as unforgettable experiences shared together, so be rest assured that your group will always be connected by having survived the jungle together.

Capacity Two to 20 pax
Email info@hgtravel.com
Website www.hgtravel.com

5 Go on a golf pilgrimage in China

Mission Hills, long recognised for offering excellent golfing experiences, will appeal to top achievers who may have played the best greens of the world.

In Guangdong province, incentive groups can play at 12 championship golf courses that are designed by golf legends such as Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman, Nick Faldo and Vijay Singh. On Hainan island, Mission Hills Haikou tantalises with 10 scenic golf courses.

Non-golfers in your group are not left out. They can take play tennis, swim or cycle around the sprawling locations. The less active can enjoy a luxurious spa experience, relax in the tranquil surroundings and play chess, take cooking classes or learn about organic farming.

Capacity More than 500 people
Email MHSalesCenter@missionhillschina.com
Website www.missionhillschina.com

6 Seafood seduction

The unspoilt paradise of Bruny Island is home to Tasmania's finest seafood. Onboard a specialised cruise vessel and with the help of experienced guides, your winners will try their hand at catching their own lunch – abalone, crayfish, oysters, sea urchin, salmon and mussels – which will be enjoyed with local wine, beers, ciders and juices.

Once the bounty is in the bag, the vessel will anchor in a calm and secluded bay where lunch will be cooked and served.

Capacity 10 pax per cruise vessel
Email info@pennicottjourneys.com.au
Website <http://pennicottjourneys.com.au/tasmanian-seafood-seduction/>



3

7 Kuman burah suneh

You are forgiven if you fail to understand "kuman burah suneh". In Orang Ulu language, this phrase means to "eat a lot". It is little wonder then that the objective of this activity in Sarawak is to have your top achievers indulge in local dishes and experience the culture of their local hosts.

After departing from the luxurious Royal Mulu Resort, your group will take a short stroll down the Deer Cave's ancient riverbed and pause to consider the power of the water that once roared through this cave, tumbling huge boulders and carving the scalloped walls.

Cocktails are served as the sun sets at Mulu Caves. Have your winners ready their cameras for the magnificent spectacle as millions of bats leave the dark recesses of the cave and swoop out through the night sky.

Participants can enter the cave holding flaming torches that pick out some of the beautiful cave formations, spot a well-known character or two before sitting down to a candlelight dinner of local delicacies. Local musical performances such as the haunting sounds of the Sape complete the evening.

Should time be lacking, delegates may opt to have cocktails at Turn Red Cave in Serikin, on the outskirts of Sarawak state capital, Kuching.

Capacity 10 to 50 delegates
Email info@sarawakcb.com
Website www.sarawakcb.com

8 Take in the best sights of Banaue and Sagada

One of the best ways to enjoy views of the Philippines' ancient Banaue rice terraces – testament to the ingenuity and engineering prowess of the indigenous Ifugaos – and the

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With state of the art business facilities, there are many venues in Indonesia equipped to host large international conference, corporate functions or small meetings, particularly, in Jakarta, Bali, Surabaya, Medan, Batam Padang, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Makassar, Manado, Solo, Palembang and Balikpapan. Hotels, conference centre and professional Convention Organizers are prepared and experienced in hosting major events.

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remote highland settlement of Sagada, with its stunning landscape, waterfalls and ancient caves, has to be by helicopter.

Pair the ride in the sky with a luxurious picnic comprising local delicacies from Manila, but only after a trek to the terraces, visits to the hanging coffins of Sagada and a cultural performance.

Capacity Flexible

Email info@islasphilippines.com

Website www.BlueHorizons.travel

9 Hire the entire Lizard Island

Beautiful, natural and wild, the most northern Great Barrier Reef resort - Lizard Island - is a place reserved for the fortunate few. Consistently ranked as one of the top resorts of the world for more than a decade, Lizard Island offers the natural beauty of the Great Barrier Reef, uninterrupted by the rest of the world.

Reward your winners by hiring the island exclusively. The 24 white sand beaches lie undisturbed but for the occasional footprints. Groups can take advantage of Lizard Island's facilities and activities including snorkelling, diving, deep-sea game fishing excursions, and indulge in secluded picnics on the private beaches too.

Capacity 80 pax

Email travel@dncinc.com

Website www.lizardisland.com.au

10 Visit a longhouse – but not just any longhouse

A visit to a longhouse is often the highlight of a trip to Sarawak, as it offers a glimpse into the lifestyle of the various tribes that have for generations inhabited the remote interior of Borneo. While there are many areas in

Sarawak where longhouses stand, Ulu Ai is one of the best. It is blessed with a stunning natural environment, comprising clean rivers and jungle streams, refreshing waterfalls and undisturbed tracts of rainforest.

At Ulu Ai, Nanga Sumpa Lodge serves as a base for a range of nature-based activities and excursions, and offers visitors the chance to learn about the culture and lifestyle of the Iban community who live in the adjacent longhouse.

Your winners can travel further upriver by longboat to have a swim at a waterfall, participate in the daily activities of the Iban people, and trek through the jungle on trails that take them along streams and through farmlands. If they are lucky, they will sight the orang-utans that dwell in the area.

Capacity No more than 36 pax

Email info@borneoadventure.com

Website www.borneoadventure.com

11 Enchanted volunteerism

Here's a do-good idea for your incentive winners. Let your winners establish deeper connection and aspiration by immersing them in 'voluntourism' at the sustainable community of GK Enchanted Farm in Angat, Bulacan, just a few hours overland from Manila.

GK, which stands for non-profit Gawad Kalinga or 'give care', aims to raise social entrepreneurs, help farmers and create wealth in the countryside.

The farm offers a slew of activities, from building houses for the poor and teaching to lending a hand in farming and social enterprises like making stuffed toys, gourmet cheeses, etc. Overnight stays are available.

Capacity 40 pax

Email info@gkenchantedfarm.com

Website gklworld.com/gk-enchanted-farm

12 Master culinary skills from a celebrity chef

Whip up a delectable meal like a professional with the help of chef Sarab Kapoor, a Singapore-based celebrity chef and cooking instructor who is also the host of the TV series, *Cook Love Eat with Sarab*.

Chef Sarab is able to teach a wide variety of dishes, from vegetarian to non-vegetarian options, including traditional Indian favourites such as *Paneer Butter Masala* to classic Singaporean delights like chicken rice and chilli crab.

Classes are conducted in a cosy kitchen and participants can dig into their culinary creations at the end in a plush dining area.

Capacity Five to eight pax

Email enquiry@cookingclass-singapore.com

Website www.cookingclass-singapore.com/celebrity-chef-sarab

13 Try heli-fishing

Been there, done that with deep sea fishing? Well, how about heli-fishing? The luxurious Seafields coastal resort in Auckland's suburbs offers heli-fishing – an activity that will transport participants by helicopter to scenic locations for fishing under professional guidance.

Seafields can arrange heli-fishing in the Hauraki Gulf, around Great Barrier Island and at the Coromande. Rods and reels, bait, tackle and light lunch are provided.

And when the action is over, your group of winners can head back to Seafields and enjoy a barbeque dinner at the coastal retreat's BBQ Terrace.

Capacity Four per helicopter

Website www.seafields.co.nz



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MICE footfalls on the rise

A focused national strategy for MICE can fuel stronger growth for India, industry stakeholders tell **Rohit Kaul**

Improvements in infrastructure and the emergence of several business hotels across India are helping to grow business event arrivals into the country. Business event visitors from Europe and the US are on the rise, although domestic demand is still the strongest.

Prashant Narayan, COO and head of Leisure Travel Inbound Business, Thomas Cook India, attributed the positive performance to the new government's proposed plan to implement electronic travel authorisation (ETA), enhanced transportation infrastructure and connectivity, and new hotels with excellent MICE facilities. He expects to see a year-on-year growth of 10 to 15 per cent in inbound MICE travellers this year.

"So far we have received a number of queries from markets such as Japan and China," said Narayan.

Chander Mansharamani, managing director of Alpcord Network Travel & Conferences, noted that "New Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad have been attracting a large chunk of international MICE movement".

In the case of the domestic market, which tends to seek value and nearby destinations, Kashmir, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kerala, Goa and Rajasthan are "topping the charts", according to Rajeev Kale, COO - MICE, Domestic & Sports Holidays, Thomas Cook India.



Mumbai's bustling financial district is feeding good corporate meetings business to hotels in the area; Gateway of India pictured above

142 The number of association meetings hosted in India, earning it 27th spot on ICCA's ranking of top meetings countries in 2013. New Delhi takes 65th spot on the global city chart with 35 meetings in 2013

"We have seen a 25 per cent rise in domestic MICE business," he added. "Domestic MICE business will always

dominate," opined Shaijo Rajan, director of events with Sofitel Mumbai BKC. "However, with the new government in formation and buoyancy in the market, we have seen growth in the international segment this year."

Rajan shared that the hotel, which is located in the heart of Mumbai's burgeoning financial district, has seen a 20 per cent growth in MICE business since last year.

"As most of the international financial

institutions are situated in the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC), the majority of business events (held in our hotel) come from the UK, the US and the Asia-Pacific region," said Rajan.

However, not all MICE stakeholders in India are in a celebratory mood.

"Given the general elections this year and the political environment in certain states, India has not been the most favoured destination," said Ramesh Daryanani, area director of sales & marketing, South Asia, Marriott International.

"Coupled with the lack of infrastructure, tedious visa approval processes and recent safety and security incidents, India (is not) the most preferred destination for international MICE events."

A number of Indian PCOs have expressed frustrations with the national tourism board's lack of focus in marketing the city for business events, and are demanding that the ministry come up with a clear strategy for the segment.

"The tourism board needs to come up with a road map that addresses the needs of this particular industry," urged Rajeev Kohli, joint managing director of Creative Travel.

Anup Nair, managing director of Incentive Destinations, also lamented: "New Delhi has a lot to offer as an incentive destination, but because of a weak marketing approach the city is not considered a priority destination for international groups."

Spotlight

Let the show begin!

Gurgaon's live entertainment destination, Kingdom of Dreams, has launched its second multipurpose venue which will provide a platform for corporate event planners to marry business with pleasure.

Named ShowShaa Theatre, the new space is able to accommodate 250 people in an auditorium setting. With a touch of a button, automatic recessing seats in ShowShaa Theatre will tuck away, transforming the space into a banquet hall.



It boasts beautiful interiors, cutting edge technology that comes in the form of state-of-the-art lighting effects and massive LED walls that can create 3D effects, as well as other event support systems such as a projection screens, stage, hydraulic stage lifts, fly bars, Kirby flying systems.

Showshaa Theatre can host business meetings, seminars, conferences,

exhibitions and academic symposiums, as well as performances like musical concerts.

Anumod Gagan Sharma, managing director of Kingdom of Dreams, said: "With ShowShaa Theatre, Kingdom of Dreams is now an ideal venue for both business and leisure activities. Our venues are on par with the best in the world."

Chander Mansharamani, managing director of Alpcord Network Travel & Conferences, sees the Kingdom of Dreams as a "unique destination" for business gatherings and one which can "add excitement to corporate meetings".

Marketplace

Pratap Palace A Keys Resort, Ajmer

Surrounded by the picturesque Aravalli Hills in Ajmer, Rajasthan, the luxurious Pratap Palace A Keys Resort revives the Rajput era through the use of intricate arches, domes, lush green courtyards, colourful gardens paved with marble flooring and railings.

It offers guests 80 well furnished rooms and suites, two conference halls, a pillarless banquet hall, a business centre, a 24-hour restaurant, and a fine dining restaurant with a bar, among other facilities.



Park Inn by Radisson Gurgaon Bilaspur

The new hotel, about an hour's drive from New Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport, offers 98 keys, more than 200m² of meeting rooms, a business centre, an all-day-dining restaurant and a fitness centre, among other facilities.

Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park

The 191-key hotel boasts an urban design and offers spacious loft inspired guestrooms, a selection of dining outlets, an outdoor pool and a gym, among other facilities. For event planners, the hotel offers eight meeting venues including a 411m² banquet hall and Backyard, an outdoor terrace.



Hilton Bangalore Embassy GolfLinks

Minutes from Bangalore's central business district and the city centre, and overlooking the Karnataka Golf Course, this 247-room hotel offers guestrooms that are said to be among the largest in the city. It has six meeting rooms, a business centre, four dining venues, a pool and fitness room, among other facilities.

Showing off the good stuff

By Patrick Tan



Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit's Chin Norathepkitti and Sofitel So Bangkok's Pattamaporn Soparat



Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Piyawan Yamarat and Thanabodee Hemsuchi



Tourism New Zealand's Emma Bell, Consumer Links Marketing India's Sandeep Ramakrishnan and Tourism New Zealand's Cristina McLauchlan



Langkawi Development Authority's Rosnina Yaacob, Win Travel Network UK's Neil Armorgie and Langkawi Development Authority's Siti Nur Hadis Saad



Tomera Conference & Incentive Czech Republic's Amal Kottnerova, Air Safety Equipment US' S Rajan and Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau India's Jalil Khan



Mandarin Orchard Singapore's Charlotte Chew, Marina Mandarin Singapore's Teo Chin Chin and Unlimited Travel Hungary's Erika Budai

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Strong and vibrant opening

By Y Unanongrak

It was absolute happiness indeed for all who attended the IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014's opening ceremony and welcome reception yesterday night. Organised by Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, attendees were treated to sumptuous food and drinks, fun games as well as energetic dance performances by the host country. Among the highlights was a special souvenir shirt handed out to all delegates.



Bustling marketplace

By Patrick Tan



Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao Bangkok's Wanphen Petroun, Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin's Anucha Supan, Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld's Shweta Malik, MICE Hubs Travel and Tours Malaysia's Konrad Ong, Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld's Watcharaa Suwipakul, Centara Hotels & Resorts Thailand's Nonthapat Tong-um and Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao Bangkok's Phetcharat Promasit



Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government's Ya Lien Yuan and James Chang



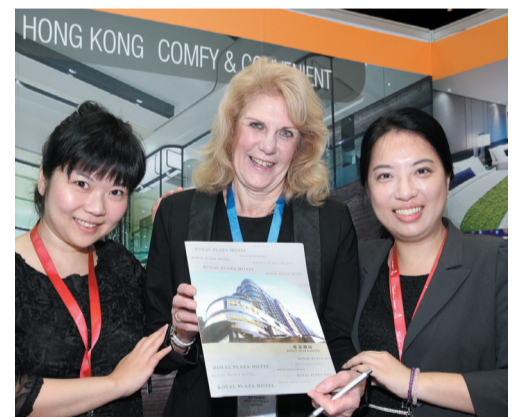
Accessibleworld Australia's Geoffrey Pfitzner and Switzerland Tourism Singapore's Dominique Oi



Seated: Park Hotel Group Singapore's Pauline Cheung, Anne Tan and Michelle Wong
Standing: Grand Park Orchard Singapore's Winston Wee, Park Hotel Hong Kong's Carman Wong, Park Hotel Group Hong Kong's Jacky Yam, Park Hotel Group China's Grace Gao and Grand Park City Hall Singapore's Jordan Lee



Far Eastern Express Travel Russia's Olga Kolomeetc, Incheon Convention Visitors' Bureau's Jinju Kang and Incheon Development & Tourism Corporation's Jae Kyun Jung



Royal Plaza Hotel Hong Kong's Louise Lok, Travel Industry Club Australia's Sue Francis and Royal Plaza Hotel Hong Kong's Jennifer Wong



Harbour Grand Hong Kong's Brian Lee, Communications & Training Italy's Gianna Brunet, On the Go Tours South Africa's Laura Pillay and Harbour Grand Kowloon Hong Kong's Doris Li



Front row, fifth from left: Macau Government Tourist Office Thailand's Nipon Suddhidhanakool with the delegation from Macau

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