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## Travel spend optimisation takes priority: managers

By Mimi Hudoyo

Travel managers are looking to optimise travel budgets instead of simply slashing them as a likely global financial crisis looms.

Amarnath Lal Das, general manager India Travel, Accenture, told the *Daily*: “We cannot change travel policy every time, although we do review them from time to time. What we are doing now is to move cautiously and focus on cost/spend optimisation.

“Say, I have a one-day meeting. I will go and return (on the same day), thus saving room cost. Downgrading myself from a five-star (hotel) to four-star will also get me savings.”

Alvan Aiau, vice president global sales & program management, Asia Pacific of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, noted that companies are no longer just fixated on travel expenses.

“Globally companies are tightening (travel budgets), but they are also thinking about what returns will they get from business trips.

“You can cut cost and stop travelling, or you can think about what that trip will bring to the company, what the return on travel investment is.”

Aiau said Carlson Wagonlit Travel has done a study on the return on travel investment. “It gives companies insights on whether travellers achieve what they set out to do on their travels,” he said.

“We have found that when travellers plan in advance and plan more meetings in a single trip, they usually achieve their objectives. This is about maximizing the purpose of their travels.”

Aiau added that a lot of companies are in the business of

people and a trip is necessary to achieve business objectives.

“Cutting cost and enforcing travel policy strictly helps but travel managers must now look beyond that,” he added.

For Credit Suisse, a consolidation of hotel partners is taken to help achieve savings.

Lena Khoo, regional head of travel, Asia-Pacific of Credit Suisse, revealed: “We have consolidated the number of hotels in our programme. Having fewer hotels means we can put more business into each property, thus giving us greater power to negotiate for better discounts.”

Khoo is also finding ways to trim hotel expenses by removing breakfast from room deals and have her travellers pay for their first meal of the day with their per diem allowance.

Offering a different view on

business travel during uncertain economic times, Chris Reynolds, senior partner of 3SIXTY Global, a UK-based consulting group specialising in global travel programmes, said spend have actually been increasing.



Reynolds: beware of employee satisfaction

“(Corporates are) driving down prices but the volume is up,” he said. “For salespeople the best way to get out of a business crisis is to sell more. Hence, they are travelling more to get more business.”

Reynolds added that people prefer to meet in person for the first time and, from his experience, video conferencing and virtual meetings “never took off”.

He opined that companies could find savings in cutting down non-essential internal meetings.

“I have a client whose internal meetings – employee travel-



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### { In brief }

#### Eastar Jet heads to Bangkok

Korean low-cost carrier Eastar Jet is expanding its services to Thailand, through the addition of a Jeju-Bangkok route. This daily service will begin on October 1.

Verena Han, sales and marketing manager of Yeha Tour Seoul, said the new air link would make Jeju island more appealing to Thai travellers “because direct connectivity is always an important factor”.

ling to meet another employee – made up 60 per cent of total travel spend. This is the sort of expenditure companies needed to cut,” he shared.

Reynolds cautioned that companies must consider how travel budget adjustments during difficult economic situations would impact employee satisfaction, as it was also important to retain talents.



### Harness the power of online

With more Millennial business travellers and event attendees today, destination promoters must invest in digital marketing, said Maureen O'Crowley, executive director, MICE division of Seoul Tourism Organization, who was one of two panellists at yesterday's keynote address which discussed global MICE trends.

O'Crowley (middle) and Supawan Teerarat (right), vice president and chief marketing officer of Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, also observed a rise in interest in second-tier cities, with the latter competing with first-tier cities for smaller-sized business events. Photo by Eugene Tang

## Safehotels branches out to raise venue security

Safehotels Alliance, which had created the Global Hotel Security Standard, will establish local representation partners in China, India and throughout South-east Asia by 2016.

Its only presence in Asia today is in Thailand, represented by Bert Van Walbeek, vice president business development Asia Pacific.

The local partners will measure the security features of hotels and conference venues, such as locking systems to availability of first aid equipment, and issue a certification that remains valid for a year.

The alliance has certified 200 hotels so far, with most of them being in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

CEO Hans Kanold ex-

plained the company's expansion into Asia is driven by demand from travel managers and hotels that insist on having a global standard in security.

He explained: “One of the weaknesses is that hotels may comply to local standards but there is no one enforcing it. Hotels may also be weak in training and general safety awareness among staff. Hardware maintenance may also be lacking.”

The Global Hotel Security Standard is recognised by ICCA and Kanold is working on getting it recognised on the buyer side, such as travel managers, tour operators and travel agents.

Geoffrey Fordham, senior

vice president, engineering, Safety & Security, Onyx Hospitality Group, believed that a global certification can “give confidence in our own internal systems”.

Fordham added: “We also get very detailed requests for proposals on safety and security to the extent that we have to name the person responsible for (those aspects).”

Underscoring the importance of safety, Geetha Arekal, Asia Pacific travel lead at Unilever Industries, said: “In our RFP we want to know how a hotel measures safety and does it match with our requirements. One bad feedback will wipe a hotel from our RFP.” – S Puvaneswary



Kanold: stronger enforcement

# Russian outbound to Asia holds despite rouble's tumble

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Despite the dramatic plunge of the Russian rouble in recent months, business travellers from the world's largest nation are still travelling to Asia due to its affordability, according to Russian buyers interviewed at IT&CMA this year.

Svetlana Lysenkova, director of Moscow-based Beneluxclub, told the *Daily* that outbound corporate travel bookings this year had climbed 10 to 20 per cent against last year.

Lysenkova said: "It is just so much cheaper to host events and incentives in Asian countries like Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam compared to Europe.

"The value of the rouble did drop but companies are still travelling, and all the more now do they need to find destinations that are cheap and Asia is a good option."

Although the weak rouble meant pricier airfares for overseas flights, Lysenkova said that had little impact on clients' overall expenditure, as the low costs of hotels and activities in Asia were helping to keep budget within control.

Outbound corporate travel bookings have also escaped

unscathed from the rouble's tumble for Korotkikh Oxana, deputy director of Altair Travel in Moscow.

"It is a lot more expensive to hold events in Europe so clients will always opt for Asia," Oxana said, adding that Bangkok is her top-selling destination.

"There are very good hotels and meeting facilities in Bangkok and they are very affordable. There are also good leisure activities to go along with corporate events," she added.

Explaining the Russian market's enduring love for Asia, Andrey Sliozberg, director of Actis Group in St Petersburg, said: "Russians are big on exotic and cultural destinations, and Asia provides that."

He remarked that Chiang Mai, Phuket and Koh Samui are some of their favourites.

While his clients remain keen on Asia, Sliozberg admitted that a weakened buying power meant that Russian com-

panies will have to work with tighter budgets. As a result, he has to negotiate with suppliers for competitive deals.

"It is also possible to provide four-star hotels instead of five-star ones should the clients have a limited budget, and we can always eliminate some of the extra activities to bring down costs," he said, stressing that the rouble fall is not a big problem and Russian companies are not quitting their trips.

Despite the buyers' positive sentiments, Thai sellers at the tradeshow said business from Russia had been severely dented as a result of weaker buying power.

Thidarat Prapasrang, assistant director of sales with Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort, said the Russian market had declined by at least 30 per cent this year, compared to 2014.

"It has affected our resort very much because Russia

is our top source market and groups often stay up to three weeks," Thidarat said.

To encourage the Russians to keep coming, Thidarat said the resort is now developing exclusive room promotions just for the market.

Phuket Panwa Beachfront Resort's senior sales manager for MICE, Chaiyapat Intanin, has also seen plunging traffic from Russia. Hence, as of this year, the resort has removed restrictive conditions around corporate bookings, such as minimum-night stays and compulsory gala dinners.

Chaiyapat added: "We want to be as attractive as possible to get the Russians to come back to the resort."



**"The (weakened) rouble is no issue because companies still have the budget to travel and will not quit their trips."**

**Andrey Sliozberg**  
Director, Actis Group, St Petersburg

## HRS rolls out Corporate App

Global hotel solutions provider HRS has launched a mobile app for its corporate clients, allowing users to search for hotels based on pre-set locations, and access information such as maps, negotiated rates and room availability.

HRS will soon add new features to the HRS Corporate App, such as a payment function with company-specific options, including pre-defined payment and billing methods. Hotel bookings can also be entered into the mobile device calendar.

Todd Arthur, managing director of HRS Singapore, said: "Mobile channels are a great help, especially on business trips, because last-minute changes to the schedule often call for new travel planning to take place," he said.

"With the HRS Corporate App featuring pre-stored information and specific corporate rates of importance for the business traveller, we make mobile bookings a lot easier for our customers."

The app is available for iOS and Android smartphone devices. After downloading "Hotel Search HRS" in the respective app stores, travellers can send a link to their smartphone via the company-specific corporate booking portal to confirm the imported corporate settings. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

## Clapping eyes on corporates

Luxury serviced residence provider klapsons has officially opened in Bangkok with a stronger pitch for the long-term travel market.

Klapsons The River Residences Bangkok contains 77 spacious rooms and suites, spread between one and three-bedroom units, located on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> floors of The River Condominium along the Chao Phraya River.

Amenities include a river-front infinity pool, two outdoor lap pools on the fifth and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors, two multi-purpose outdoor courts and a sky garden.

"We are appealing to a different sort of traveller, people who want their accommodation to look and feel like a luxury

hotel but at the same time want to live like a local," explained Alex Loh, managing director of klapsons The River Residences Bangkok.

The property is targeting expats relocating to Bangkok as well as expatriated Thais returning home. Key markets are MNCs and financial institutions, Loh said, although Loh revealed that the sales team is also approaching various embassies and governments.

While largely targeted at business travellers as well as corporate employees on longer-term overseas assignments, he added that klapsons would also appeal to "a smaller percentage of tourists coming for leisure", said Loh. – **Michael Mackey**



## Vying for MICE recovery

Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok is leveraging its strong standing in the MICE sector to recover from the fallout of the recent bombing in the Thai capital.

The hotel's location next to the Erawan Shrine, which was the site of the deadly blast that killed 20 people in August, had inevitably affected arrival numbers to the property, marketing and communications manager Khemwanta Tangon told the *Daily*.

Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok has since rolled out recovery efforts to woo back business.

"We launched our MICE package and we went to our MICE contacts and media to spread the message," said Khemwanta.

One part of this initiative is

to adjust the MICE package by offering a three nights' stay for the price of two, she revealed.

Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok also received support from hospitality members and trade bodies such as the Ratchaprasong Square Trade Association and Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau.

"They even went to China to host a gala dinner with MICE media to showcase the facilities we had," she said.

Looking forward, Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok is optimistic that travellers' confidence will return.

"MICE business is picking up for the hotel," commented Khemwanta. – **Michael Mackey**

### { In brief }

#### Myanmar sets up office in Tokyo

The Myanmar Tourism Federation last week opened its second overseas representative office in Tokyo, following the launch of the first one in the US earlier this year. It now has a mutual agreement with the Japanese Public Diplomacy Association to encourage the growth of Japanese arrivals. The market grew 12 per cent so far this year, bringing Japanese footfalls to 58,527 and generating approximately US\$1.8 billion of direct tourism income.

#### Sandstone to become luxe hotel

The iconic Sandstone buildings in Sydney, comprising the Lands Building and the Education Building, will be reestablished as a new luxury property. Singapore's Pontiac Land Group, in agreement with Government Property New South Wales, will be spending A\$300 million (US\$210 million) to redevelop the heritage site into a hotel, creating approximately 240 rooms. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2018.

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# MERS is but a mere memory for planners

By Paige Lee Pei Qi and Michael Mackey

MICE buyers are registering strong interest and confidence in South Korea again, following the mid-year MERS scare which sent business events plunging south.



O’Crowley: riding out the storm well

While Blazey Nocon, MICE operations supervisor of Travel Experts in Manila, had faced cancellations to Seoul during the MERS period in June and July, he told the *Daily* that it is now “a thing of the past”.

Nocon remarked: “We are even seeing an increase in requests compared to last year because our clients enjoy the weather and food in South Korea, and prices are also cheaper compared to Japan.”

Nocon said his company has a confirmed incentive group of approximately 90 pax bound for Seoul in February 2016, and is presently pending confirmation from another corporate group.

Li Haijiao, account manager of Comfort MICE Service in Beijing, who has three incentive groups visiting Seoul and Jeju this month, said clients are no longer concerned about South Korea’s MERS situation.

“The Chinese are still very interested in South Korea because it is considered a fashionable destination, and they are drawn by the Korean dramas. There is a star quality associated with the destination,” Li added.



Li: land of stars

Thai corporate interest is also returning, noted Choochai Chinanurakchart, operations manager of Bangkok-based Meetings & Convention Planner. Choochai is now planning for a 150-pax meeting and incentive group to Seoul.

“Despite the MERS scare, South Korea has bounced back as a hot destination for meetings because it has a rich culture, plus good and convenient meeting facilities,” he said.

Maureen O’Crowley, executive direc-

tor, MICE Division with Seoul Tourism Organisation (STO), has also confirmed that business has “resumed as per usual”, with October showing itself to be a “very strong month”.

She added: “MERS was a short-lived situation and we were able to ride out

the storm and we did quite well.”

To truly recapture business, STO rolled out at the start of September a series of perks for business event groups that confirmed their travels to Seoul by September 30. Two programmes were available, one banking

on Seoul’s major autumn festivals and the other offering a 10,000 won (US\$8.40) food credit per delegate, a city tour of Seoul on coach, and up to three million won in credit towards a Seoul-based performance for events taking place by June 2016.



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## Eshet Israel joins Euromic network

Euromic, an international consortium of DMCs specialising in business events and travel, has expanded its global network to include Israel with the addition of Eshet Incentives & Conferences as its newest member.

Eshet Incentives & Conferences is regarded as Israel’s leading DMC, with a history of more than 28 years. It is the winner of two SITE Crystal Awards in the categories of *Outstanding Single Event* and *Trip Delivery of five nights or more*.

Amnon Ben-David, president and CEO of Eshet, said joining the network would give his company “the opportunity to share information and experience”.

# All ready for business

By Eugene Tang



Seoul Tourism Organization's Jin-Hyeok Park



Centara Hotels & Resorts Thailand's Jamie Crisp (third from left) and Sarah Randall (fifth from left) get firm backing from the team



Resorts World Sentosa Thailand's Surachet Vasinkamonchai and Resorts World Sentosa Singapore's Jati Hartanto and Resorts World Sentosa Thailand's Varatha Chantra-Urai



Taipei Department of Information and Tourism's Ya Lien Yuan and Chuen-Huey Jiang



Tourism Promotions Board Philippines' Domingo Ramon Enerio III (standing, centre) and his delegation are all ready for business



Hyatt Regency Hua Hin's Kittiya Wedchayanon, Wise Incentives US' Rich Wise and Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok's Theeraya Sombon



Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket's Wasee Na Nakorn, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort's Thidarat Prapasrang, Laguna Phuket's Prapa Hemmin, Banyan Tree Phuket & Angsana Laguna Phuket's Paritchawan Kraiponrak, Laguna Phuket's Nantanee Chuaychu and Banyan Tree Phuket & Angsana Laguna Phuket's Jiraporn Hemarat



Travel Specialist Ventures Philippines' Luchie Mendoza Sta Ana and Visit Korea's Changho Ham

Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau's Jin Hun Cho and Jeju Special Self-Governing Provincial Government's Lee Jung Hwan and Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau's Sean Shin



Meet Taiwan's Christy Peng (third from left), Taiwan Convention & Exhibition Association's Thomas Tsou (centre) and L6 Taipei Department of Information and Tourism's Chuen-Huey Jiang (fifth from left)



Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Zulkefli Hj Sharif (front row, centre) stands strong with a big Malaysian contingent

# Meet the sellers



## Kaohsiung City Government Economic Development Bureau, Taiwan

Kaohsiung City has hosted a variety of major events such as 2013 Asia Pacific Cities Summit, International Fastener Show, and International Boat Show. These events not only brought direct consumption, but also increased revenue for hotels, restaurants, shopping malls and sightseeing spots. As a new MICE star of Asia, Kaohsiung City is seeking more conferences and exhibitions from Asia.

Services offered by Kaohsiung City's Meeting & Event Promotion Office include event promotion and advertisement, administrative support, bidding support, and professional assistance such as consultancy of incentive regulations on meetings and events, and provision of information on local PEOs, PCOs, venues, transportation and catering services.

Contact: [d32379@tier.org.tw](mailto:d32379@tier.org.tw)

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## Taiwanlook DMC, Taiwan

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Contact: [hazel.chang@gisgroup.com](mailto:hazel.chang@gisgroup.com)



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# Meet the sellers



## The Shilla Jeju, South Korea

Since its opening in 1990, The Shilla Jeju has gained a reputation for being a high-class resort hotel set amid the beautiful landscape of Jeju, one of the world's most attractive natural and cultural heritage sites. It has successfully handled many major international events, and is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World luxury property network.

The hotel offers a year-round cultural and entertainment programme for guests, as well as a leisure advisor service called GAO (Guest Activities Organizer) and a full travel reservation service called TPO (Travel Plan Office) which covers everything from flight reservations to rental car reservations.

Contact: [ramy@jejuvb.or.kr](mailto:ramy@jejuvb.or.kr)

## The Peninsula Bangkok, Thailand

The Peninsula Bangkok offers the Meeting in Style package for any meeting groups with a minimum of 20 rooms booked per night. The organiser will enjoy a selection of three special privileges from a list comprising the following: an extra coffee break for their meeting; a 50 per cent discount on corkage charge; a roundtrip complimentary limousine transfer; and a rejuvenating breathing exercise programme by the award-winning Peninsula Spa; among others. This package is available for booking until December 20, 2015 for events occurring by June 30, 2016..

Contact: [ssinsap@peninsula.com](mailto:ssinsap@peninsula.com)



## Coex, South Korea

Coex rises four storeys from the ground, offering 36,007m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space and a floor area of 460,000m<sup>2</sup>. Four exhibition halls can be partitioned into 12 separate rooms, and it includes a convention hall that can accommodate up to 7,000 people.

The venue in Seoul also boasts 54 meeting rooms and office space equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and a cutting edge building management system.

Coex has evolved into a leading culture-business platform, propelled by the opening of the new Coex Mall in 2014 and SM Town in 2015, and the designation of Gangnam as a Special Tourist Zone dedicated to the MICE industry.

Contact: [miracle@coex.co.kr](mailto:miracle@coex.co.kr)



## Berlin Tourismus & Kongress, Germany

Berlin is the shining star among all European cities today – vibrant, dynamic, unique, still changing even after 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It offers plenty to experience, from contemporary European history and sightseeing attractions, to trendy restaurants and bars, to outstanding events throughout the year. Travellers are spoilt for choice in terms of accommodation, as Berlin has the most modern and diverse hotel portfolio in Europe.

Nightlife in Berlin is legendary, with no official closing hours and a plethora of unique clubs offering live music, trend-setting dance floors and renowned DJs.

Berlin is also full of nature, offered through the city's many waterways and parks, surrounded by great landscapes. There are also many wonderful golf courses in the city.

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## Taman Bhagawan, Bali, Indonesia

Taman Bhagawan offers a unique outdoor function space for special events and celebrations. This beachfront destination strikes a fine balance between Indonesia artistry and international sophistication, and can accommodate up to 2,000 people. It is perfect for corporate incentives. It is a 20-minute car journey from Bali's international airport and only a stone's throw away from Nusa Dua's 47,000 four- and five-star hotel rooms, meeting and convention facilities.

Contact: [asta@tamanbhagawan.com](mailto:asta@tamanbhagawan.com)



## The Okura Prestige Bangkok, Thailand

The Okura Prestige Bangkok is the perfect choice for leisure and business travellers. The stylish and fashionable five-star hotel is located in a prime city centre location, close to major shopping malls and with direct access to the city's BTS SkyTrain network at Phloenchit station. All 240 rooms and suites at The Okura Prestige Bangkok offer impressive views across a dynamic city skyline through triple-glazed e-coated panoramic windows that insulate against both heat and noise. The rooms combine comfort and luxury with the very latest technological developments – from fine Egyptian cotton sheets to environmentally-friendly bathroom amenities, digital bedside control panels and flat-screen internet TVs. Guests will love the fine dining choices at Up & Above, Elements and the signature Japanese restaurant Yamazato. The hotel also features a cantilevered infinity pool on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor and The Okura Spa provides the perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of Bangkok city life.

Contact: [panithee.bo@okurabangkok.com](mailto:panithee.bo@okurabangkok.com)



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## Rising star

MICE interest in Gyeonggi is up, thanks to a young and eager CVB, available convention facilities and the province's accessibility. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

**T**he formation of the Gyeonggi MICE Bureau in July 2011 has brought good news to the South Korean province's MICE sector. Active promotion of the destination for business events has resulted in MICE arrivals leaping from six million in 2012 to eight million in 2013.

According to the bureau's deputy general manager, Charles Park, destination promotion efforts so far have included participation in international and domestic exhibitions, and publicity campaigns in industry publications

"It is about getting the word out that there is a lot of MICE potential here in Gyeonggi," Park said.

Gyeonggi MICE Bureau also offers a highly-coordinated support system for event bidding, overseas promotion and hosting of international events. This system is available to societies, associations and corporations planning on holding large events in the province. Events that qualify for support can enjoy perks like a hosted lunch or dinner banquet with performances for event delegates, complimentary guidebooks or subsidised rental of convention facilities.

Aiding the bureau in its MICE promotion efforts is the province's stellar geographic location – it sits close to South Korea's Incheon International Airport, making it easily accessible.

Its convention centre is also the country's largest and Asia's fifth largest. Korea International Exhibition Centre (KINTEX) features 108,049m<sup>2</sup> of flexible event spaces, including 57 meeting rooms, a 6,000-seat event hall and a 2,000-seat ballroom. The entire venue can accommodate up to 10,000 delegates at one time.

"(KINTEX) gives us a competitive edge and we are able to attract many large-scale international conferences with this facility," Park remarked.

Besides KINTEX, Gyeonggi also offers business event planners three other venue options – Cheongshim Peace World Center, Sintex, and Gyeonggi Small and Medium Business Center. They can accommodate 25,000, 1,000 and 500 delegates respectively in their largest halls.

Park believes that Gyeonggi's competitive hotel rates, which can be at least 10 to 20 per cent lower than that of Seoul, is also a pull factor. Furthermore, the province has an inventory of 9,360 hotel rooms, enough to support large-scale business events.

Park said the upcoming 2016 Rotary International Convention with 56,000 participants and Hair World 2016 with 80,000 participants are a testament to the growing international appeal of the province.

Gyeonggi, which is the centre of South Korea's manufacturing industry, will appeal especially to relevant multinational companies. Exclusive factory tours can be arranged with local corporations such as Samsung, LG Electronics and Hyundai Motor Group.

Gyeonggi is not short on pre- and post-event recreation too. Onemount Snowpark, the first indoor winter theme park in South Korea, offers activities like sledding and can accommodate 2,000 people at any one time.

Tommy Lee, overseas sales team senior

manager of Onemount Snowpark, said the attraction has customisable spaces for corporate groups that are keen on taking their gatherings somewhere unique.

Describing Onemount Snowpark as a "very special place" that will give delegates a "memorable time", Lee said the park appeals due to its ability to "bring winter to (delegates) at any time of the year."

Local MICE specialists have, however, noted that interest in Gyeonggi still pales in comparison with the other more established South Korea MICE cities.

While Bosuk Tours CEO Richard Suh recognises Gyeonggi's accessibility, he remarked: "The more popular options would still be Busan or Jeju."

E J Fieldhouse, Pacific World South Korea's country manager and director of Kim's Travel Service, said: "Most of our clients still opt for Seoul and we will usually plan a day trip there (to Gyeonggi). But if their priority is accessibility to KINTEX, then they will choose Gyeonggi."

## Numbers

**222** The number of International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) events held in Korea in 2014, compared to 260 in 2013

**15** Seoul's position among the top 20 cities in the world based on the number of ICCA meetings held in 2014. It was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in 2013

**888** The number of the world's top photographers who will be present in Seoul for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Federation Internationale de l'Art Photographique (FIAP) Congress in August 2016

## Spotlight

### A glimpse into the mysterious North

The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that sits between North and South Korea is known for being a well-preserved stretch where both peace and tension coexist between the two countries.

The only way into this restricted area is by joining an organised tour and Gyeonggi MICE Bureau is able to assist corporate groups in tailoring one.

Several observatories are available in the DMZ and they offer visitors a peek into the mysterious North.

Tours start off at Camp Bonifas, the

joint US and Korea army camp just outside the DMZ, and are led by soldier guides. Visitors will then board designated buses to travel into the Joint Security Area. Straddling the ceasefire line, this is the only place where one can take a safe step into North Korea.

Once back on the bus, delegates will be taken to one of Panmunjom's lookout posts where two villages within the DMZ can be seen – Daeseong-dong in the South and Gijeong-dong in the North. The latter is also known among South Koreans as Propaganda Village because all the buildings there are empty.

Later at Dora Observatory at the top of Dorasan, visitors can peer through binoculars for a closer look at Kaesong city and Kaesong Industrial Complex.

But to truly understand the complex and confrontational relationship between North and South Korea, one must go on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infiltration Tunnel tour.

Designed by the North for a surprise attack on the South, this 1.7km-long, 2m-high and 2m-wide tunnel is said to allow an estimated 30,000 soldiers to move through it per hour. It was discovered in 1978 by South Korean forces. A tour of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infiltration Tunnel will no doubt offer an unforgettable experience for any visitor.

The tunnel offers various sightseeing points such as the DMZ Video room, symbolic sculptures, souvenir shops and more.



Paige Lee Pei Qi

The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) slashes across the Korean Peninsula, separating the North and South



Hanok traditional house

## My South Korea

Paige Lee Pei Qi recommends three must-dos in the country

### Hanok stay

To experience the local traditional housing and hospitality, visitors should spend a night or more at a Korean traditional house called a *hanok*.

Referred to as living museums, *hanoks* contain in their layout and structure the history of ancient Korean architecture and society. Combining the elegance of Korea's past with modern amenities, many *hanoks* provide accommodation while offering cultural immersion programmes for an unforgettable experience.

### Noryangjin Fish Market

For an authentic fishy experience, head over to the famous Noryangjin Fish Market – the largest fish market in Seoul.

This bustling fish market allows room for negotiation with the vendors. Once your chosen fish is sold, they will spear the fish and bring it to a nearby restaurant which

will cook it for you. Apart from fish, a wide variety of seafood such as crabs and oysters and prawns is available too.

### Nanta

Hailed as the most popular musical show – without dialogue – in South Korea, *Nanta* continues to draw rave reviews and will entertain your delegates. Through rhythmic banging of knives, pots and pans, this 100-minute show tells the story of four crazy chefs who have been set the impossible task of setting up a wedding banquet in just one hour. What follows is pure musical mayhem. Tickets are priced from 40,000 won (US\$34).



Excitement in the kitchen

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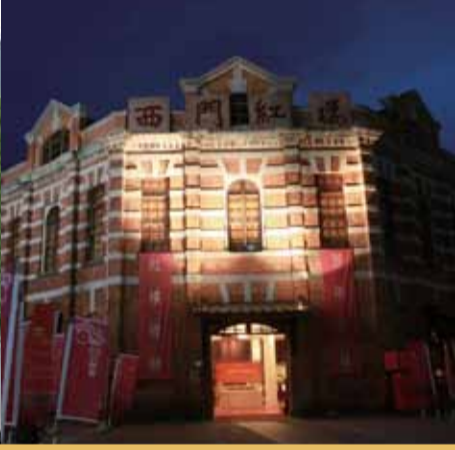
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## Keeping a positive spirit

It is challenging days ahead for the MICE sector due to a stormy external environment. By Prudence Lui

**H**ong Kong's MICE industry players are taking a cautious look at business against a backdrop of negative growth in 1H2015 in both the long- and short-haul markets.

According to Hong Kong Tourism Board's (HKTB) MICE and Cruise, general manager, Kenneth Wong, the existing macroenvironment will continue to be volatile and unpredictable, and will in turn hurt tourism.

However, Wong urged MICE industry players to "remain optimistic, nimble and entrepreneurial".

He said: "The convention and exhibition segments have a strong foundation and will be able to weather this storm. Hong Kong is a highly attractive destination that offers diverse and unbeatable experiences for MICE visitors from around the world."

He promised a continued working relationship between HKTB and MICE organisers and players from other related sectors "to uphold Hong Kong's position as a preferred MICE destination".

These efforts are backed by a government grant of HK\$15 million (US\$1.93 million) to allow HKTB to enhance its bidding packages for business events.

"This additional funding will increase the overall attractiveness of Hong Kong for international events," he remarked.

However, Cary Chiu, general manager of PC Tours and Travel, shared his



HKTB has been given HK\$15 million to strengthen its event bidding capabilities

anxiety with the *Daily*, claiming that the state of business today is worse than what was seen during the SARS outbreak in 2003.

Chiu explained: "With the Hong Kong dollar pegged to the US dollar (which had strengthened, placing the exchange rate at press time at HK\$7.80 to US\$1), Hong Kong is now an expensive destination when compared with destinations like Japan, South Korea and Thailand whose currencies had depreciated.

"Dangling attractive hotel offers will

not even lure visitors because there is keen competition from neighbouring destinations. I am not optimistic about 2016 as the downward trend may prevail."

Hotel representatives who spoke to the *Daily* rejected Chiu's outlook.

The Mira Hong Kong's director of sales & marketing, Eva Kwan, said the hotel recorded a 21 per cent business growth year-to-date in July this year, with strong business leads particularly from the US and the UK.

Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon

### Numbers

**10.4** The percentage drop in overnight visitor arrivals, down to 801,808, in 1H2015. The longhaul markets suffered the most with a 17.7 per cent decline

**16** Hong Kong's ICCA city ranking in 2014, based on the number of international meetings it held – it had 98. Hong Kong took 21<sup>st</sup> spot in 2013

**24.9** The percentage year-on-year decline in Taiwan arrivals in 1H2015, making it the worst performing shorthaul market for Hong Kong. Macau was the best performer, posting a 23.4 per cent increase

East, director of sales & marketing, Felix Wong, also noted that MICE business was still coming in for the hotel.

"Given the current market sentiments it is understandable that our room rates have been affected slightly," Wong said. "But Hong Kong remains attractive for business events."

Kwan shared that in 2016 The Mira Hong Kong will focus on attracting small- to medium-sized corporate groups which form the core of the hotel's MICE business.

### My Hong Kong

Prudence Lui recommends three must-dos in her destination

#### Holiday Inn and Action Asia Events

Holiday Inn teams up with Action Asia Events to organise a series of team-building activities for its corporate clients. Activities include scavenging tasks designed to get staff members to communicate and work together. Outdoor activities are complemented by indoor tasks and training based within the hotel's 7,600m<sup>2</sup> ballroom.

#### Ngong Ping 360

Ngong Ping 360 entices corporates with the world's first teambuilding event conducted through a silent drama. This

Silence Motion 360 is a partnership with the attraction and Dialogue Experience.

The training programme starts with a spectacular cable car ride, followed by a silent drama conducted by deaf trainers who will challenge participants to expand their horizons by creating and performing a drama without speaking.

#### Ocean Park

Ocean Park offers a new animal-encounter programme in its recently-launched Adventures in Australia. The *Australian Animal Discovery* programme enables guests to get up and close with three iconic South Australian animals – the laughing kookaburra, red-necked wallaby and southern koala. Activities include preparing eucalyptus leaves for koalas and taking a picture with the kookaburras, while learning more about the animals and their natural habitat.



### Spotlight

#### Black and bold

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort has a new product called Black Box, a flexible space for entertainment, shows and corporate buyouts.

Located between Adventureland and Grizzly Gulch attractions, this 1,400m<sup>2</sup> venue was launched along with the park's headline summer event, the *Frozen Village Experience*. Black Box was divided into a variety of entertainment spaces – the 300-seat Crown Jewel Theater, a snow play area, Olaf's Ice Slide, and Oaken's Trading Post which offered *Frozen*-themed menus and merchandise.

Available for corporate buyouts, the Black Box can be used for premium or

tailored business events. The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions was the first to do so, buying out the *Frozen Village Experience* for its VIPs. An outdoor dessert buffet was created to enhance the experience.

Venue capacity varies according to the scale of entertainment provided, but Black Box is ideal for small- to medium-scale events.

Vice president, sales and distribution marketing of the resort, Terruce Wang, said: "(Black Box) will serve as home base for many of our upcoming shows (that feature blockbuster Disney and Disney Pixar characters), making Black Box pivotal to our entertainment strategy of providing unrivalled opportunities to deliver extraordinary experiences only available at our resort."



From left: Holiday Inn's teambuilding games; Ocean Park's animal adventures

# Meet the buyers



“For our events in 2015 we are looking for hotels, villas and game lodges in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, South Africa, Kenya, Turkey and other

destinations. We are also keen on making contact with conference venues, DMCs, inbound agencies, cruise lines and airlines.”

– **Muhammad Ashraf, director, Urdam Tours & Travels, Pakistan**

## Association buyer spotlight

**Daniel Strassberg**  
Executive director Asia Pacific & EMEA  
Quest International Users Group, Australia



**What do you hope to accomplish for your association at IT&CM Asia?**

Changes in the economic environment (the global financial crises, for example) have seen a change in the membership levels and participation. Congresses and conferences need to be different, unique and memorable but how can this be achieved when you have been doing the same thing for 20 years?

**What are your expected takeaways from the Association Day session?**

Ideas for conferences that are individual, imagination capturing and something that has a wow factor but will not shatter the bank. Networking and connections with other associations, partners and vendors.

**What are you shopping for at IT&CM Asia this year?**

I want ideas, concepts and places that are out-of-the-box. I want to be educated about something different that will make a mark on me and my board of directors. For example, we did a fantastic dinner at a winery where every dish was made from local produce. The menu was decided after the group

went to the market and bought fresh and interesting produce of the day. It was interactive and educational. We need such creative yet realistic experiences.

**Iain Bitran**  
Executive director  
International Society for Professional Innovation Management, the UK

**What do you hope to accomplish for your association at IT&CM Asia?**

We have recently created a dedicated Asia-Pacific event and we are looking for innovative cities where we can hold it. One major challenge for us is how do we connect with the local innovation community in different countries, and we would like help on this matter from the convention bureaus.

**What are your expected takeaways from the Association Day session?**

To learn from other association executives about how they meet with challenges and objectives.

**What are you shopping for at IT&CM Asia this year?**

I would like to meet with convention bureaus representing the following cities: Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Auckland, Hong Kong, Kyoto, Seoul and Taipei.

### Destinations most wanted

Joseph William Burke, TMP planner of United States Steel Corp, the US, is keen on **China, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Fiji** and **Bali**.

**Thailand, China** and **Singapore** are on the shopping list of Misha Radulovic, president of Unique Meetings & Incentives, the US.

Jhessy Cordero, general manager of Wanderstruck Travel & Tours, the Philippines, is interested in **Japan** and **Phuket**.



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## Running the MICE race

The city remains upbeat that the economy will pick up despite 1H's weaker traffic, writes **Prudence Lui**



Aerial view of the city of Macau

**T**hough meeting and convention business dropped slightly for the first half, Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) remains optimistic that the economy will recover very soon.

This assertion is predicated on the soon-to-open new attraction and venue, as well as support from the Central Government. A spokesman said: "We are positive about the MICE traffic and performance for the rest of 2015, (as) the slight downturn at the start of the year will turnaround. The peak of the MICE industry season is usually from mid-year onwards, and we foresee more events in

the second half of the year, including those organised by corporation and associations.

"Moreover, the Central Government has recently scrapped the limitation imposed on the number of entries by Chinese officials and therefore, event organisers are able to invite high-level Chinese officials to come to Macau more easily. We (further) encourage associations to bid for conferences and participate in overseas road shows."

The city has been keen to tap on mega events and has taken the initiative to contact local event organisers and overseas associations to bid for events via IPIM's one-stop assistance. Recent successes

include the 2017 Asia Pacific Dental Congress for 2,500 to 3,000 pax in 2Q2017, and the SIGGRAPH Asia 2017 (International Conference and Exhibition on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques) in 4Q2016 with an estimated 7,000 attendees. The International Conference on Cyber-Crime and Computer Forensic recently concluded with 150 pax in June 2015.

In terms of the incentive market, Macau Government Tourist Office's (MGTO) Incentive Travel Stimulation Program received a total of 22 successful incentive group applications with 13,304 participants, down from a total of 24 incentive group applications with 14,249 participants in the same period in 2014.

Still, MGTO saw the first application from Portugal, consisting of 110 participants. This group recently completed its incentive event in May. Another group of 8,200 participants has also confirmed its event at the end of this year.

CEO of smallWORLD Experience, Bruno Simoes observed that business was very good until May, when the number of requests and revenue plunged about 50 per cent.

"(The) Macau Government has done marginal improvements. Much more could be done but progress has been slow. The upside is that the hotel sector has been quite dynamic in order to attract business. Since the beginning of 2015, all hotel operators are now focusing on other business streams, namely MICE."

To spur incentive traffic, MGTO revamped the Stimulation Program on July 1, 2015 and renamed it the Travel Stimu-

### Numbers

**190** As of 1Q2015, corporate meetings dominated the overall types of events at 74 per cent. It is six meetings less than the same period last year. Each meeting lasted an average duration of 2.2 days, down from 2.5 days

**107** The number of meetings and conferences which had 10 to 49 participants. This group dominated Macau's meetings business, accounting for 56.3 per cent of the total meeting count. Larger meetings and conferences with 200 participants or more numbered only 21

**160** The number of meetings and conferences in Macau that occupied a floor area of less than 500m<sup>2</sup>. This group dominated Macau's meetings business, accounting for 84.2 per cent of the total meeting count. Those occupying a floor area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> and more increased by one to 16

lation Program. Confirmed incentives, weddings or student travel activities with a minimum of 25 non-Macau participants staying in Macau for at least two consecutive nights, will be eligible to apply. Successful applicants will receive support from MGTO in the form of tourist info kits, souvenirs, a 30-minute cultural performance and a half-day historical tour, based on their group size.

### Spotlight

## A slew of new entertainment spaces

The US\$3.2 billion Studio City Macau sets itself apart from other integrated resorts (IRs) by offering versatile entertainment options and outdoor venues which are lacking in Macau. These enable event planners to create more options to woo clientele.

This Hollywood-inspired IR, set to open on October 27, 2015, boasts innovative entertainment elements like the Golden Reel, claimed to be the world's first figure-eight Ferris wheel; a live-mag-

ic theatre called The House of Magic; and a Warner Bros. Batman-themed 4-D flight simulation.

Melco Crown Entertainment vice president of sales and marketing, Grant Johnson, said: "We would like to take advantage of the entertainment and get delegates out of (the) boardroom to have some fun. For instance, guests may enjoy a thrilling pre-dinner ride at Batman Dark Flight Adventure followed by a luxurious gala dinner.

"Or we can provide a two-hour corporate buyout of the ferris wheel with a dining experience. A private bar can (also) be set up at the outdoor platform of the ride on the 28<sup>th</sup> floor."

Indeed, planners are spoilt for choice when it comes to venues. Take the Studio City Event Garden for instance.

The outdoor tropical-themed pool deck can accommodate 300 pax. Then there's also a 1,820m<sup>2</sup> ballroom, eight individual salons and a 5,000-seater indoor multipurpose entertainment centre – complete with 16 private corporate suites and 242 club-level seats with hospitality and catering services available.

Hotel-wise, both the Star and Celebrity Towers offer a total of 1,600 rooms, where about 45 per cent of inventory are twins.



### My Macau

Prudence Lui recommends three must-dos in the city

#### Grand Hyatt Macau

Grand Hyatt Macau has engaged a teambuilding company to roll out Survival Games – a series of challenges with a combination of physical and mental training. There are six different challenges. For example, the Archery Fun is run in a war game format. Participants work in teams, where each member has a different role, and they would have to strategise and plan in order to win the challenge.

#### Macau Tower

Scale the outside of the Macau Tower's concrete shaft on this purpose-built outdoor climbing wall. Recently opened, it is Asia's highest climbing wall, standing at 32m tall.

This is a fun activity for people of all ages, and the experienced staff will provide coaching. For more experienced climbers, Lead Climbing is available on a



From left: Survival Games at Grand Hyatt Macau; Macau Tower sport climbing

case-by-case basis. This activity can be added to group itineraries or packaged along with Macau Tower's other adventure activities like the Bungy Jump, Skyjump, Skywalk or Tower Climb.

#### Goldspark Macau Tours

Charter an open-top bus and tour Macau at your own pace. Operated by Goldspark Macau Tours, it's available for hire during the day or at night. Facilities include free Wi-Fi onboard and an audio system that provides information in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.



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## Picking up the pace



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**Kuala Lumpur is a choice location for business events but it has to continually upgrade its programmes to remain competitive**

### Chinese and Indian MICE organisers are returning to the country in droves, reports S Puvaneswary

This year saw a number of large Chinese incentives groups to Malaysia. This included 6,000 delegates from Perfect China who spent 10 days in Malaysia, and 5,000 delegates from Infinitus China who had their event in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan from June 17-29. Recently, 1,000 delegates from China's Olympic committee and media, came to Kuala Lumpur from July 20 to August 3, for the 128<sup>th</sup> International Olympic Committee session where Beijing made their final pitch for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

An inbound agent big in the Chinese market, Mint Leong, managing director of Sunflower Holidays, said: "The Chinese MICE market is slowly recovering from the Malaysia Airlines MH370 disaster in 2014. However, we have seen a pick up this year. Last year, our biggest group from China was Perfect China with 3,800 delegates. This year, the group size has almost doubled. Last year, we had a few incentive groups averaging 300 people. This year, we have a number of incentive groups averaging 3,000."

Fiona Pang, sales manager for Greater China at Mayflower Acme Tours, said her company has also received several re-

quests for proposals for group incentives exceeding 1,000 pax for 2016. "It shows that Chinese MICE organisers are once again interested in Malaysia."

Apart from the Chinese market, MICE business from India is also doing well, agents report. Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia said: "This year, we handled small groups with an average size of 200. Last year, many companies had held back their travel as it was the election year in India."

A Aruldas, managing director of Tourland Travel, said forward bookings for incentives from India from July onwards have also seen an increase over the same period last year.

### Numbers

**6,000** Number of delegates from Perfect China who came to Malaysia in July for an incentive trip. This was the largest business events group that MyCEB supported in 2015

**30** Malaysia's ranking in the ICCA Global Ranking 2014 out of 115 countries, up from 35 in 2013

**41** Confirmed groups under the *Malaysia Twin Deal X* promotion since it was introduced in February 2015, with an estimated total of 18,100 delegates and RM283 million (US\$69 million) in economic impact

Aruldas said: "One of the challenges for Malaysia is competition from neighbouring countries that are offering e-visas such as Singapore or visas-on-arrival such as Hong Kong and Thailand."

The MERS outbreak in Seoul also saw some groups shift to Malaysia and inbound Malaysian agents are benefiting from it. Leong said a company from China shifted their incentive travel to Malaysia this August for some 400 delegates.

Das said an Indian pharmaceutical company had also changed its product launch location from Seoul to Kuala Lumpur, which brought some 32 delegates to the capital city for three nights in June.

Commenting on the *Malaysia Twin Deal X (MTDX)* campaign introduced by the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Centre (MyCEB), Leong said: "It helps to lower costs and makes the destination more attractive to international MICE organisers."

The *Malaysia Twin Deal X*, comprising two programmes, namely Deal 1 and Deal 2, provides value added support for international corporate meeting and incentive groups for a minimum group size of 50 and provides rewards for international corporate meeting and incentive planners who bring in a minimum of 500 participants.

Pang agreed that the incentives in the *MTDX* programme motivates organisers to consider Malaysia. However, for future incentive schemes, she suggested that should MyCEB provide cash incentives to organisers, it would give Malaysia an edge over other destinations.

### Spotlight A handmade souvenir

Kuala Lumpur (KL) City Gallery is well-known for its 2-D and 3-D miniature, veneer art pieces of heritage buildings and iconic landmarks.

Back in 2012, it was a stop for FIT tourists, but today, with its increased products and services, it attracts corporate groups as well.

Carol Khan, communications director at KL City Gallery, opined that this venue should be the first stop for visitors who want to learn more about the city, her history, her current offerings and future infrastructure development plans such as the Tun Razak Exchange and Mass Rapid Transit project.

Located in a two-storey, national heritage building, KL City Gallery offers an impressive multimedia show, showcasing a 12m by 15m of the city with acrylic models representing existing buildings, crystal models featuring future developments and wooden models representing heritage sites. According to Khan, this is the largest model of Kuala Lumpur in the country.

MICE groups can watch master craftsmen produce art pieces of iconic buildings such as the Petronas Twin Towers and village houses in the countryside. They also have a hands-on opportunity to create these art pieces and colour them with guidance from a master craftsman.

Saini Vermeulen, executive director, Within Earth Holidays, said: "People are more appreciative of creating their own souvenirs rather than purchasing it off the shelf."

Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: "We normally take visitors to see iconic places in the city before visiting KL City Gallery where they will assemble and produce miniature versions of some of the places they have visited. It becomes more meaningful for visitors that way."



**Kuala Lumpur City Gallery**

### My Malaysia

S Puvaneswary recommends three must-dos in the country

#### Mud: Our Story of Kuala Lumpur

*Mud: Our Story of Kuala Lumpur*, is a musical celebrating the spirit of the Malaysian capital and her people who built it with their hopes and dreams. This 50-minute live performance is shown twice daily at 15.00 and 20.30, except on the second and fourth Monday of every month. The show will run until April 2017.

Tickets are available for purchase online at over the counter at Panggung Bandaraya theatre.



**From left: Mud: Our Story of Kuala Lumpur; District 21; Langkawi SkyDome**

#### Langkawi SkyDome

The Langkawi SkyDome, South-east Asia's first outdoor dome gives visitors a panoramic 360-degree view while watching animated films. It is built on top of Machinchang Mountain on Langkawi



Island and it is accessible via the Langkawi Cable Car.

#### District 21

District 21 is 6,500m<sup>2</sup> post-apocalyptic themed action adventure park, located in

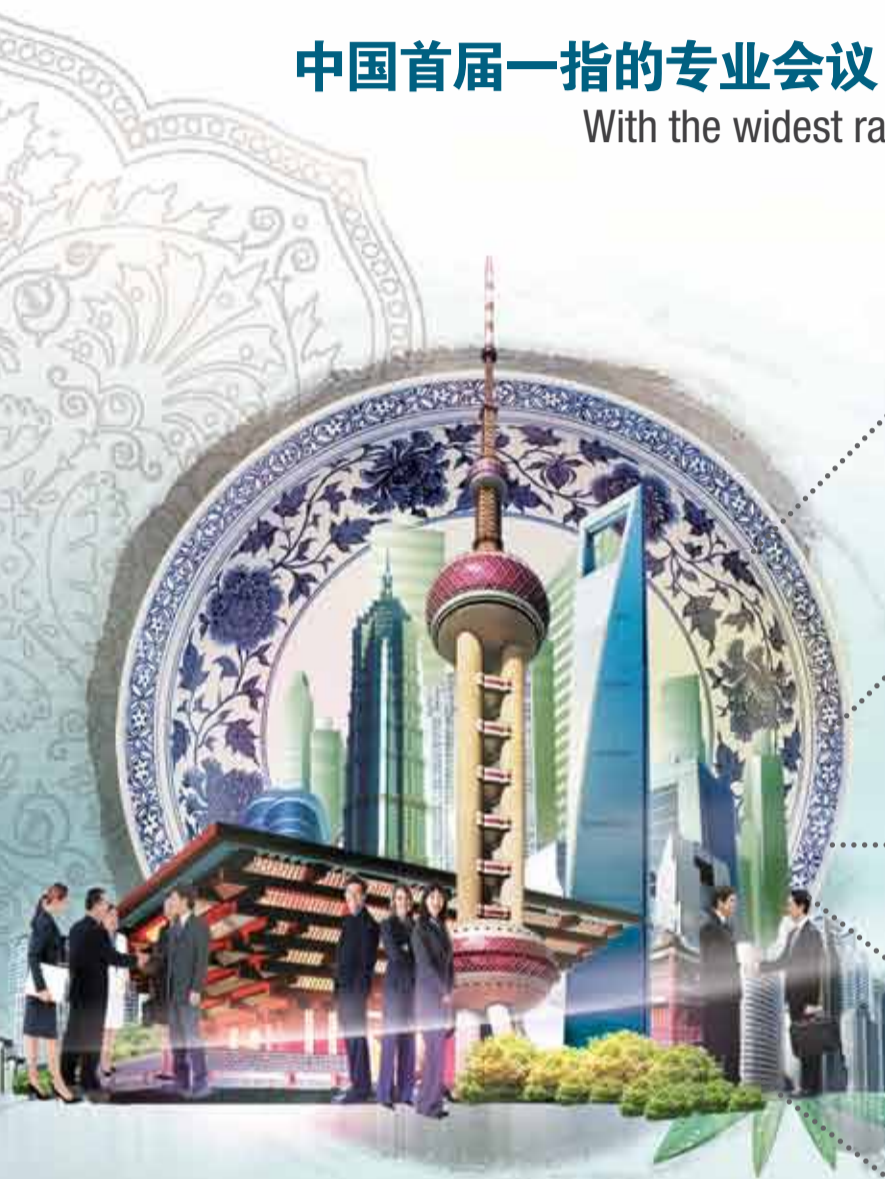


the air-conditioned atrium of IOI City Mall in Putrajaya. It comprises 11 attractions and eight function rooms, and offers corporate teambuilding packages with activities that will get visitors climbing, jumping, sliding and "flying".

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参展商兼赞助商MEET Taiwan, 台湾 Lily Su, 总监

“We received **very interesting leads** as early as during the first day of business appointments.”

Exhibitor Melia Hotel International, China Ruben Casas, Senior Director of Sales & Marketing Asia-Pacific

“参展商拥有很完善的资料。他们了解中国市场，了解买家的需求。”

买家湖南途易国际旅行社，中国 Joyson Chen, 总经理

“Since **many professionals in the MICE and tourism industry** participate at IT&CM China, I was able to make contacts and networks.”

Media Korea Tourism News, Korea Kim Eun Kyung, Reporter

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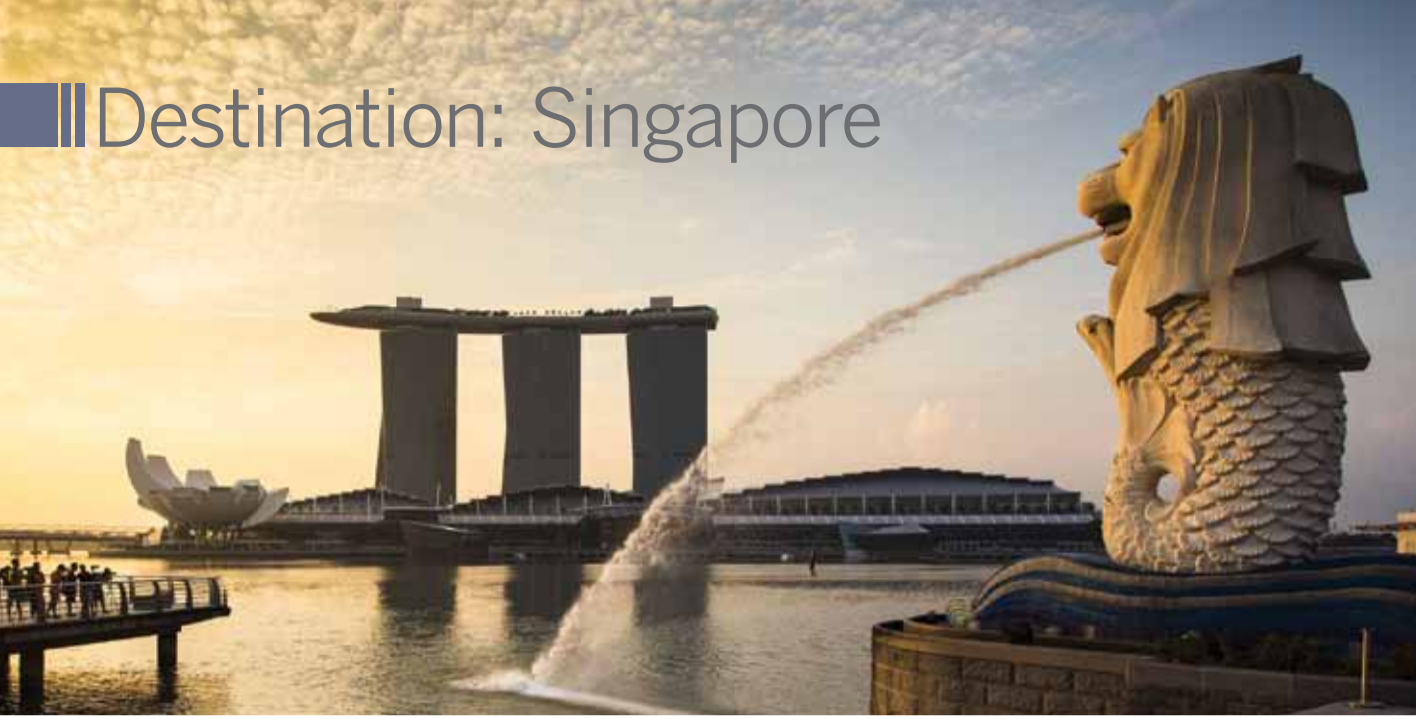


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## Numbers

**142** The number of ICCA events held in Singapore in 2014, compared to 175 in 2013

**20,000** The number of delegates expected to visit during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Lions Club International Convention 2020 – the largest-ever association congress secured for Singapore. This is expected to contribute S\$58 million (US\$43.6 million) in tourism receipts

**60,000** The number of hotel rooms available in Singapore by the end of 2015, a notable increase from the 54,962 rooms recorded at the end of 2013

# The law of attraction

Further enhancements to existing incentive programmes are essential in capturing lucrative MICE markets. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Singapore is stepping up its game by working closely with industry partners to deliver premium tailored experiences in the *In Singapore Incentives & Rewards* (INSPIRE) programme to continue capturing a slice of the lucrative incentive market from China and India.

The programme, which was revamped late last year, has since been extended to end 2015. Recent enhancements for the Indian programme include customised food menus and VIP access to attractions.

Chang Chee Pey, executive director, South Asia, Middle East and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said: “The revamped INSPIRE brings more exclusive privileges and customised activities to satisfy the evolving preferences of India’s incentive travel segment, which is now looking for experiences that are compel-

ling, immersive and sophisticated.”

The new INSPIRE activities include complimentary dining experiences suited to the Indian palate at Singapore’s newest attractions. These include a buffet spread at Gardens By The Bay; a cocktail session at Madame Tussauds; a beachside dinner at Sentosa; and Indian vegetarian buffet breakfasts at Resorts World Sentosa’s (RWS) Adventure Cove Waterpark and Universal Studios Singapore.

The INSPIRE programme was launched in India and China in 2013 and 2014 respectively, with major stakeholders such as Changi Airport Group, Gardens by the Bay, RWS, Sentosa Leisure Group, Singapore Turf Club and Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

Chinese and Indian incentive groups can enjoy exclusive curated itineraries. For example, RWS will be able to provide

welcome cocktails with a meet and greet session with movie characters at Universal Studios Singapore. The Night Safari can also host complimentary welcome drinks and an exclusive animal appearance for groups.

According to RWS spokesman Clement Ng, China, Malaysia and India are their top three MICE clientele and these markets have grown by 10 to 20 per cent annually over the past five years.

Ng said venues like Universal Studios Singapore’s New York Street zone, which can seat 1,500 guests for evening functions; and the WaterWorld Stunt Show Amphitheatre which can seat 3,500 delegates, and offers pyrotechnics and stunt performances, have been popular with corporate event organisers.

Michael Chiay, senior director, meetings & events, Asia Pacific, CWT, said: “For

non-hotel venues, organising dinners for more than 300 delegates may be difficult, and for large group sizes that can only be supported at integrated resorts, the costs can be high. Nevertheless, Singapore still stands out because of its international accessibility within the Asia-Pacific region, its great infrastructure and safe reputation.”

Matthew Smith, director of performance improvement, MCI Group Asia Pacific, said: “Singapore is still seen by some clients as a great conference or convention destination, but not as an incentive destination because the key highlights are unlikely to be the actual activity or tour.”

As such, INSPIRE seeks to inject unique programmes into existing attractions to help boost the appeal of incentives.

## Spotlight

### Meeting in nature’s embrace

It is actually possible to get away from the concrete jungle’s hustle and bustle for a refreshing meeting experience. Perched high atop a cliff amid lush tropical gardens on Sentosa island, The Singapore Resort & Spa Sentosa promises an unforgettable meeting experience for delegates.

The two-storey conference centre, set apart from the hotel’s main lobby, is designed to bring the outdoors in. With its pillarless meeting areas, the rooms allow natural light to illuminate the space, before spilling out onto a delicately

manicured lawn with a spectacular view of the South China Sea.

Offering over 1,300m<sup>2</sup> of meeting facilities, the conference centre has a total of 17 flexible meeting rooms. The Straits Ballroom is the largest and can accommodate 360 delegates in a theatre setting. For more intimate meetings, rooms like Kusu I and Kusu II – which can fit 12 pax each in a boardroom setting – will be ideal.

Unique to this venue is the spacious private foyer area, a perfect setting for coffee breaks in between meetings as

it will bring the attendees out for a breath of fresh air amid the lush greenery.

The property also offers complimentary Wi-Fi access throughout the premises, and two ‘e-corners’ that provide access to computers and printing facilities.

Exclusive privileges will be extended to corporate groups if they stay in the 215-key property. For example, groups can enjoy inclusions like assorted welcome pastries in the morning, a round of closing cocktail drinks, or additional gourmet bites during the coffee break.



## My Singapore

Paige Lee Pei Qi recommends three must-dos in the island state

### Flight Experience

Empower your delegates and let them try their hand at flying a commercial jet. Located at the Singapore Flyer, Flight Experience is a simulator that replicates being in a Boeing 737-800 cockpit. It allows participants to take to the skies controlling an aeroplane with full-functioning avionics and photorealistic visuals.



From left: Flight Experience; Bollywood Veggies

Exclusive hire for a minimum of two hours allows up to 12 people a turn at the controls, guided by professional instructors.



### Bollywood Veggies

Get away from the hustle and bustle of the city for a fresh breath in the countryside; yes, Singapore has her own pockets of

nature too! Head to Bollywood Veggies farm in Kranji, where delegates can partake in teambuilding programmes such as potting plants, treasure hunts and culinary classes that promise fresh, farm-to-table cuisine.

### Lazarus Island

Charter a yacht and sail your delegates to Singapore’s last unspoilt beach on Lazarus Island. The yacht will bring them around the Southern Islands and serve champagne and canapes on board, before docking at Lazarus Island for water activities. Wind down by sailing the delegates back to mainland while watching the sunset against the magnificent Singapore skyline.



# Overcoming sponsorship challenge for associations

By S Puvaneswary

It is becoming more difficult for associations to get sponsorship today than it was during the last global financial crisis, sources told the *Daily*.

Manoj Verman, president, Indian National Group of International Society for Rock Mechanics, shared: "Traditional sponsors don't see as much benefit of sponsoring an event as they had in the past. There are other avenues of marketing that the Internet has opened up.

"In the future, conferences may evolve to become more web-based, and conference numbers could be smaller in nature," he added. "The challenge then would be to find ways to entice sponsors when numbers are smaller."

Tiani Bradilovic, conference and event organiser for Melbourne-based Association of Corporate Counsel, said: "Organisations have tighter budgets and they are now demanding more for less. They want us to work for them and bring business to their doorstep whereas our arrangement was to give them access to our members.

"While they value what we can offer them, they are not



**"In the future, conferences may evolve to become more web-based, and conference numbers could be smaller in nature."**

**Manoj Verman**

President, Indian National Group of International Society for Rock Mechanics

prepared to pay for it," she commented.

Jose Cambler, project manager at Meeting Planner System in Spain shared that most sponsors want to participate in congresses because they seek brand recognition and brand

recall, but decline other activities however.

Said Cambler: "We offer potential sponsors a wide range of options to choose from to fit companies of varied budgets. At the same time, we are also open to new proposals."

Speaking at the Association Day Forum yesterday, Simon Pryer, CEO of the Mathematical Association of Victoria, said it takes time to get a new sponsor, thus associations should build their relationships with sponsors and treat them as long-term "partners".

He also advised associations to implement a sponsorship policy that looks at the type of sponsors they wish to get for their events. While it is easy to identify sponsors that are a good fit, associations should also target sponsors that seem "incongruent" – the rationale being that some sponsors will want to come onboard merely to be identified with other big brand names.

Pryor said associations can cultivate their relationship with sponsors by keeping them abreast with updates of their achievements. To court sponsors, associations should also highlight how they can bring value to the organisation.

# TCEB steps up courtship of international MICE

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has fleshed out a trio of its existing marketing programmes to bolster Thailand's appeal as a MICE destination.

Of the three packages, the "most important" one is Thailand Connect Beyond the Capital, according to Nooch Homrossukhon, TCEB's director of meeting and incentive department.

This package encourages international meeting and incentive groups to travel beyond Bangkok by offering a limited subsidy of 1,000 baht (US\$27.60) per pax, available for a minimum of 100 pax and three nights' stay. Travel also has to be conducted with a TCEB partner airline.

"We provide them with the financial subsidy to encourage them to (visit) other cities," said Nooch, adding that the programme also presents an opportunity to showcase Thailand's diverse destinations and connectivity.

Also part of the Connect campaign is Connect Business, which offers an incentive of US\$100 per trade visitor for MICE groups from Asian coun-

tries, applicable for a delegation of 10 visitors with a minimum of 30 business meetings and staying at least three days and two nights in Thailand.

The third component of the Connect campaign is the Welcome Package, which gives MICE visitors accommodation, dining and spa privileges in Bangkok's Ratchaprasong, the city's upmarket hotels and shopping district, said Nooch.

For 2015, TCEB is forecasting a five per cent growth in MICE arrivals to around one million and generate 92 billion baht in revenues, TCEB president, Nopparat Maythaveekulchai, told the *Daily*.

Focus will be placed on arrivals from Asia, especially ASEAN, North Asia and India.

While the longhaul market does not look "so good", Parichat Svetasreni, TCEB's director of marketing and corporate image department, has higher hopes for the emerging markets of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"The numbers (from the emerging markets) are not that high but their growth is," Parichat said. – **Michael Mackey**

**CORRECTION**

In Issue 2 of the IT&CMA show daily, the photo of *An investment in the future of Asia's MICE industry* was erroneously attributed to Eugene Tang. The photo was taken by Yingyong Unnongrak. We regret any inconvenience caused.

# Where good sellers convene

By Eugene Tang



Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Nopparat Maythaveekulchai and Nooch Homrossukhon



Philippine International Convention Center's Roberto Garcia, SMX Convention Center Philippines' Myla Venegas, Afro Asian World Events Philippines' Angel Ramos Bognot, SMX Convention Center Philippines' Maria Agnes Pacis and JTR Events & Marketing Vietnam's Tan Robert



Front row: Luzern Convention Bureau's Zoe Laporte, Arosa Kulm Hotel Switzerland's Andre Salamin, Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau's Guendalina Rampazzi  
Back row: Zurich Tourism's Nana Liu, Lake Geneva Region's Francois Michel, Bern Tourism's Marc Steffen, Switzerland Tourism Singapore's Dominique Oi, Destination Davos Klosters' Markus Schiedeck and Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation's Anja Loetscher



Deutsche Messe Venue Operations Indonesia's Hendrik Engelking and Lena Schreyer



Indian Tourism Singapore's R K Suman

Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Robby Hasan and Hari Budiarti



G hotel Malaysia's Kevin Cheah, TTG Asia Media's Michael Chow and Eastin Hotel, Penang's Raj

# All ears for an opening blast!

By Eugene Tang



World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations Malaysia's Roger Rajah



CSL Travel & Tours Cambodia's Srauy Virith, B2B Cambodia's Eang Sokravy, CSL Travel & Tours Cambodia's Chhay Sivlin and Asia Explorer Travel Cambodia's Kim Chan Lekha



Bukit Gambang Resort City Malaysia's Jazby Gan, Sunway Resort Hotel Malaysia's Florence Tan, Sunway Lagoon Malaysia's K C Chew and Erica Lai, and Sunflower Holidays Malaysia's Mint Leong



The Mathematical Association of Victoria Australia's Simon Pryor, Karcher Russia's Elena Antipova, Luxe Travel Russia's Boris Kolokolov and MicePro Russia's Mikhail Fedorov



WinPlusWin South Korea's James Kang and Chloe Yoonju Jang



Sapporo Convention Bureau's Sara Suzuki and Ayako Kurosawa



Maxim Holidays India's Yusuf Hassan, Servus Amigo Austria's Brigitte Pasler, JTR Events & Marketing Vietnam's Tan Robert and Lac Hong Voyages Vietnam's Tran Vinh Loc Jonathan



Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Chartchai Debpang and Goodluck Express Thailand's Surawat Akaraworamatt



China International Capital Corporation's Vicky Wang and Shu Ya

# A bustling show kicks off

By Eugene Tang



Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket's Wasee Na Nakorn



InterContinental Bangkok's Thitiwan Sakdiarpa and Noppadol Chaiyakool, and Business Time Scanorama Israel's Shali Hizkiahou



Ark Travel Care Bangladesh's Amina Rashid Khan and Deutsche Messe Venue Operations Indonesia's Hendrik Engelking



Hotels n Apartments India's Nitin Mittal, Unilever Industries India's Geetha Arekal and Association of Corporate Travel Executives Hong Kong's Benson Tang



Utopia India's Jasminder Brishan, Thai Airways International's Somsiri Lippan and Jirawadi Virabutr

Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort's Thidrat Prapasrang and Cantore Viaggi Italy's Laura Carbone



Japan National Tourism Organization's Kenichiro Ozaki and S I Travel Cambodia's Sothy Seng



Sopol Lublin Poland's Malgorzata Cwiklinska-Soltys and Intas Destination Management Philippines' Kevin Jemel Hinahon

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