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Korea drives new MICE group

By Dannon Har

THE Korea MICE Association (KMA) is putting itself in the driver's seat to unite Asia-Pacific's MICE associations into a combined regional entity, tentatively named the Asia-Pacific Federation of MICE Association.

KMA is taking a step-by-step approach, first collaborating with the individual Asia-Pacific counterparts in the various nations. From one MoU it signed with the Japan Convention Management Association back in 2013, it now has an MoU with the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers, signed in 2014, and another with the China MICE Committee, signed in 2015.

KMA is signing this afternoon an

MoU with the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA). It hopes to continue signing one MoU a year in the hope of achieving its goal of forming the regionwide MICE association for Asia-Pacific in the near future, said Kyuree Kim, assistant manager of KMA.



Kim: step-by-step approach

Kim added that KMA might sign an MoU with Malaysia or Taiwan next year.

According to Kim, the major MICE associations in South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Malaysia have agreed to the massive undertaking during a kickoff meeting held in February this year.

KMA has set a rough timeline by 2020 for the new federation. "This (regionwide MICE association) is a long-term project to serve Asia-Pacific countries,"

she said.

Currently, there is already the Asian Federation of Exhibition and Convention Associations (AFECA) although it is more focused on these two segments than the meetings and incentives segments. Separately there is also an attempt to set up an Asia-Pacific society of association executives.

TICA's general manager Prapaphan Sungmuang said TICA is already a member of AFECA, but it is not saying no to the idea of the new MICE association. Meanwhile, the MoU with KMA will enhance collaboration between the two countries, especially in the areas of professional education, training and marketing.

Last year, for example, under KMA's MoU with China, 30 Chinese buyers visited South Korea to meet MICE sellers.

Boosts to twin Taiwan with Japan, Korea

Planners handling the Vietnam outbound MICE market now have greater incentives to combine Taiwan with Japan or South Korea.

Taiwan has eased the visa policy for Vietnam passport holders travelling in a group, allowing them free entry to the country if they already hold visas for Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Schengen states and the US, among others, according to Jonathan Tran, executive director of Lac Hong Voyages. The move is effective this month.

At the same time, Vanilla Air, the LCC unit of ANA Holdings, earlier this month launched a daily service between Tokyo and Ho Chi Minh City with a stop in Taipei. The airline uses the A330-200 aircraft.

Tran said: "This opens up a new opportunity for us to create programmes combining Taiwan with Japan or South Korea. Visa applications to both countries are easy to obtain and accessibility to South Korea is not a problem as there are many flights."

His company is already capitalising on the opportunity by programming three nights in Taiwan with three nights in Japan or South Korea; or two nights in Taiwan with three nights in Japan or South Korea, which will start next year.

"Taiwan is in the middle between Vietnam and Japan or South Korea, so combining these countries is a nice arrangement," Tran said.

Besides, as the flight is an LCC, the budget is kept reasonable, he said. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



An opening that packs a punch

IT&CMA/CTW 2016 delegates got a kick out of Tuesday night's opening ceremony and welcome reception, Siam Spice Night, which featured spicy food and showcased talented Thais, including kickboxers and The Voice Thailand Season One's Keng Thachaya. The event was held at the Royal Paragon Hall and hosted by Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Welcoming delegates are Royal Paragon Hall's Talun Theng, TCEB's Supawan Teerarat, Nopparat Maythaveekulchai and Weerasak Kowsurat, and TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng. Photo by Eugene Tang

HCVB charts next 5 years' takings

India's first regional convention bureau, Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau (HCVB), turns five years old this year with flying colours and is charting the course to put Hyderabad further on the global MICE map in the next five years.

Gary Khan, CEO of HCVB since its formation in 2011, can now count a "very good track record" of winning 19 association bids out of the 36 HCVB had put in since the bureau's inception.

HCVB's strategic marketing plan for the next five years will see the bureau focusing its efforts on the European region because that is the "crux of associations".

It plans to increase its participation in roadshows in Europe from once to twice a year, and maintaining presence in tradeshow.

It will also focus on the IT, health-care, pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors which are Hyderabad's strongest suits. While the Telangana state currently brandishes India's only purpose-built convention and exhibition

centre that can accommodate up to 6,500 delegates, Khan admitted that this infrastructure might still pale in comparison to other cities' convention facilities that can host up to 20,000 guests.



Khan: track record and hungry for more

However, he pointed to the presence of a huge Indian market as Hyderabad's winning factor. "The strength we have is in our numbers (people) because we can provide a huge attendance number that no other country can offer. We are not talking about just 20 or 50 more people, but a few hundreds. We also give associations the opportunity to increase their membership," he said.

Pointing to the ICANN Congress, which will be held in November with 4,000 delegates, Khan said these big international names that are descending upon Hyderabad are a "testimony" to the destination's capability to host large-scale events. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Monaco nets ASEAN MICE

By Mimi Hudoyo

In just two years of opening a South-east Asia office in Singapore, the contribution of the ASEAN leisure and MICE traffic to Monaco is now on the same level as that of China, where Monaco has had a presence since 2006.

The general ratio is 25 per cent MICE and 75 leisure markets and, describing this achievement as "striking", Benoit Badufle, regional director of Monaco Government Tourist Bureau Asia Office (Southeast Asia, Greater China and Korea) believes meetings and incentives from ASEAN, predominantly Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam, are set to grow even more in the years to come.

This is because the South-east Asian economy and demographics are growing, whereas the core markets of Europe are slowing.

"(Besides), South-east Asian travellers have reached the threshold (of mass tourism) and are starting to look at

experiential travel. This trend trickles to the MICE industry: companies first send their staff to the neighbouring destinations than gradually go farther."

Among the Asian companies which have sent groups to Monaco are Maybank and Prudential while Samsung holds its annual Samsung European Forum in Monaco.

Asia now contributes five per cent of total arrivals to Monaco and Badufle's target is to double the figure in the next five years.

Jonathan Tran, executive director of Lac Hong Voyages in Vietnam, said: "There is increased spending power among our clients especially with the economy of Vietnam improving so we have been observing an increase in requests for Monaco, which is considered (novel) and high-end."

Although there are no direct connections from Vietnam, it is a destination people will be willing to travel to because it's so exclusive."



Badufle: double the contribution

ASEAN gets it right with exhibitions

By Dannon Har

South-east Asia is poised to see the most growth in the exhibitions sector in the near future compared with any other geographic market in the world, in large part because it generally gets the supply and demand balance right, according to Mark Cochrane, regional manager Asia/Pacific, UFI.

Speaking at the ASEAN MICE Forum on Tuesday, Cochrane pointed out that a key reason other Asian nations would not see as strong a growth as ASEAN is due to either their oversupply of venues



or an undersupply.

Countries like Japan and India need more capacity while China, with over 5.6 million square metres of indoor space, has built too much.

“(China) has definitely overbuilt in the past decade. It has exhibition centres that are absolutely massive such as the 300,000m² Kunming Dianchi International Convention & Exhibition Center and the 400,000m² National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai. China has multiple venues (whose space is) equal or more than the total capacity available in Japan,” said Cochrane.

Too much space creates problems, he explained. Although China is a big economy, the centres are still going to be heavily under-utilised. “Some venues there even have two to three per cent utilisation rates and can barely cover their electricity costs with the space they sell. It has a negative impact because when you have that much of (unused) space, then the venues get

“It is hard to balance building exhibition centres at the right time and at the right size and scale. A lot of countries get it wrong.”

Mark Cochrane
Regional manager Asia/Pacific, UFI

desperate and may just copy events that are doing well.”

Cochrane cautioned that having venue capacity alone does not equate to more business. But not having enough exhibition space too means that a market can’t handle the growth when it does come. The key then, is balance, he said.

South-east Asia is in good shape. “It is hard to balance building exhibition centres at the right time and at the right size and scale. A lot of countries get it wrong. But Thailand and Singapore for instance have got the right capacity and private venues that are very well managed,” he said.

Between 2011 and 2015, Indonesia recorded the most growth globally with a 33.8 per cent increase, followed by Taiwan (28.6 per cent), China (28.1 per cent) and Vietnam (27.4 per cent). Despite being more mature markets, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore also saw significant growths at 24 per cent, 23.8 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

Said Cochrane: “We will continue to see Indonesia being one of the fastest-growing markets in the next few years... it is probably the most underserved market in Asia especially if you look at the size of the economy. However, limited venue space and supporting infrastructure make it tricky and hold the market back a little.”

Meanwhile, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, with their great collection of domestic and international organisers, strong government support and privately owned venues, “have all the key pieces in place” to facilitate the growth, said Cochrane.

But he predicted Singapore would be the first in South-east Asia to undergo a transition towards smaller, niche shows rather than the historical big ones such as CommunicAsia and Food & Hotel Asia.

This trend stems from exhibition delegates’ growing preference for high-value, conference-driven events that host a smaller number of more relevant buyers and sellers.

Added Cochrane: “Ten years ago we have very broad shows but that is not what exhibitors want anymore. (Buyers) just want to meet the right exhibitors and not go to a huge show where 90 per cent of the exhibitors don’t affect them.”



Direct to second wave cities

Infrastructure development alone will not create a wave of secondary MICE cities, with buyers interviewed saying that what’s needed are direct air connections.

Sabina Pe, managing director of Bridges Travel and Tours in the Philippines, said: “Chiang Mai is actually one of the new destinations we are interested in because we need to bring clients to somewhere different instead of Bangkok every year.

“But transfers are needed because there are no direct flights (from the Philippines). This would mean additional time from layovers, which will frustrate them,” she said.

Likewise, Jonathan Tran, executive director of Lac Hong Voyages in Vietnam, mostly sends his groups to Bangkok, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur because it will be a “logistical nightmare” to plan transits and transfers to destinations that are not directly linked. Moreover added costs will be involved,

he said.

“It will only work if the group is 50 pax and below, as that’s more manageable,” Tran added.

Acknowledging the issue of air connectivity, Ashwin Gunasekhehran, CEO of Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau, said: “The expansion of Penang airport took place just last year but together with the government, we are relooking the model. We need a second expansion of the airport because arrivals are doubling.”

While leisure tourists still form the largest proportion of travellers, Penang is ready to tap MICE with two new upcoming convention centres, said Gunasekhehran.

Likewise, Pairach Piboonrunroj, director of MICE Excellence Centre, Chiang Mai University, said the city is “ready to welcome business events” with new star-rated hotels and meeting spaces. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

{ In brief }

Christchurch outbids New York for structural engineering congress

Christchurch has outbid New York for the International Association of Bridge and Structural Engineering Congress (IABSE) in 2020. The five-day event is expected to draw 550 delegates worldwide. New Zealand is well known for its earthquake engineering and low damage construction techniques, said Stephen Hicks of the Heavy Research Engineering Association and chair, New Zealand Group of IABSE, who put forward the bid with Alessandro Palermo of the University of Canterbury, who is an award-winning earthquake engineering expert.

Agricultural economists to be out in the sun

The African Association of Agricultural Economists is looking for a beachfront meeting space in Thailand which can host at least 500 delegates for association meetings. Buyer Jeffers Miruka, executive manager, is interested in a venue which can combine both meetings and incentives. Contact him at jmiruka@aaa-africa.org.

Bid for travel packages at SITE’s Auction 2.0

SITE Foundation has launched Auction 2.0, the proceeds of which will help fund research and education programming to raise the knowledge and skills of incentive travel professionals worldwide. The online auction has opened and will close on October 24. It is open to the public, so anyone can bid. Visit www.siteglobal.com/auction to explore exciting travel packages which can be bought instantly and help raise professionalism at the same time.

Push ASEAN as single MICE area: buyers

By Mimi Hudoyo
While ASEAN has been extensively marketed as a single destination for leisure travel, the same cannot be said for MICE, prompting buyers to call for more visible efforts from governments and stronger public-private partnerships to make that a reality.

This is especially when ASEAN already has what it takes to reach the ideal of a single MICE destination, including good air connectivity and the rise of new destinations within the region, they said.

Twin-country itineraries are especially relevant to the longhaul MICE market as travellers want to maximise their time in ASEAN, said Susan Soong, assistant general manager of Borneo Destination Management.

“Combined destinations can be arranged for meetings and incentives of between 50 and 100 people. (We can) organise the meeting in one destination and a post tour in another.”

Increasing intra-region links have opened up opportunities for DMCs to spotlight emerging countries like Cambodia and Vietnam in multi-country incentive programmes.

“Since Turkish Airlines opened services from Istanbul to Hanoi and Phnom Penh a year ago, there has been growing interest in these destinations,” said Murat Ayar, general manager of Travel Dreams, Turkey.

“For new destinations like Cambodia and Vietnam, combining both countries is more attractive and make clients’ trips worthwhile,” said Ayar.

Unlike Thailand, whose competitive prices and diverse attractions make it a strong mono destination for his corporate clients, Cambodia and Vietnam need to be combined to attract participants, he said.

Taufiq Rahman, chief executive of Journey Plus, Bangladesh, has also witnessed a growing interest from clients for new ASEAN destinations for corporate meetings and incentives.

“Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia have been (top destinations) for us, but Vietnam, Cambodia and

Laos are new windows (of opportunities).”

To promote ASEAN as a single MICE destination, buyers urged governments to lend greater support to DMCs.

Association events can also be leveraged to promote ASEAN MICE, accord-

ing to Andang Prasmiko, business development manager of PACTO Convex.

“The main event can take place in one destination, while the post tours, technical visits, etc, can be conducted in other countries in the region.”

What is needed is better coordination

between the involved associations and the local governments, although profit sharing poses a challenge.

“Splitting an (association) event means having to balance the value of the whole event (across the host countries),” acknowledged Andang.



Andang: leverage association events

Five under-30s picked for ICCA congress

Five under-30s passed the test and were picked to attend the 55th ICCA Congress 2016 in Kuching this November in a contest organised by the Sarawak Convention Bureau and ICCA Asia-Pacific Chapter.

The five are Jovina Singh (India), Melanie Adan (South Korea), Siobhan Donalson (New Zealand), Stephen Liu (Taiwan) and Olivia Jia (China). They had to submit a written piece expressing their thoughts on Kuching as the destination for 2016 event, CSR initiatives for the next ICCA Congress or the implementation of new technologies in future congresses. They also underwent a gruelling teleconference interview.

Their sponsorship includes conference registration, accommodation, transfer and a cash grant for airfare.

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Airbnb keeps pushing

By Dannon Har
Homesharing giant Airbnb is continuing its aggressive push into the business travel market despite indicators showing that its foray into the corporate travel world is seeing mixed results so far.

The services Airbnb has developed for business travellers have found an uptake among companies like Autodesk, which introduced Airbnb for Business in March to provide more options for its employees, said Asia-Pacific travel manager Adriana Nainggolan.

“There is no preference from one to the other as each (vendor) has its own unique offering,” she said, adding that it took some time for Autodesk to integrate the Airbnb tool, including training employees and assimilating the process across various departments.

But Manulife Indonesia, despite using sharing economy options for several years now, is still adopting a wait-and-see stance to enrol Airbnb for Business, travel manager Flora Josephine, told the *Daily*.

“We need to (analyse) it deeply since this is new. We have not yet used Airbnb as

our vendor and put it in our travel policy,” she said. According to a survey of 68 travel managers conducted by TTG Asia Media’s Events Group in partnership with Oakwood Worldwide, only 23.4 per cent of respondents will use sharing economy providers, while the rest indicated either negatively (35.9 per cent) or are unsure.

Tobias Ragge, CEO of HRS, said: “Airbnb is a great concept for leisure travellers but their properties are not a real alternative to a hotel, at least for the business traveller with a travel pattern of one- to two-night stays.”

But an Airbnb property “makes a lot of sense” for long-term stays or in cities such as San Francisco where hotel inventory is limited and rates are inflated, he opined.

Ragge also thinks Airbnb is unlikely to create any “tectonic shift” in the corporate travel landscape. “I see maybe 10-15 per cent of the market taken by shared economy providers at some point, but hotels are here to stay.”

But since launching the Airbnb for Business suite of tools in July 2015, Airbnb has done a number of initiatives

to position itself as a credible alternative accommodation provider for corporate travellers. This includes its recent move to integrate with major management systems like BCD Travel and Carlson Wagonlit Travel to “marry with the gold standards of corporate travel”, said Kevin Hoong, business travel lead, Asia-Pacific at Airbnb.

“Another thing we did is to integrate our platform with top duty of care providers like International SOS and iJET,” added Hoong, signalling Airbnb’s willingness to address duty of care concerns to better serve corporate travellers.

Hoong said Airbnb business-ready options now number in the “tens of thousands” out of its total inventory of 2.5 million homes.

“We encourage our hosts to make their home business-ready (by) providing them with free carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. We also partner with providers of automated key locks under the Host Assist programme,” he shared.

Hoong said the company plans to “double down” on existing TMC partnerships and raise awareness of Airbnb for Business. “Sponsoring CTW Asia-Pacific is one example how we want to be more proactive in this region,” he said.

Travel motivates Cambodians

By Mimi Hudoyo and Paige Lee Pei Qi

The fast-growing economy in Cambodia in the last decade, powered by sectors such as finance, telecommunications and logistics, is fuelling the growth of a robust outbound MICE market.

Hong Sok Heng, managing director of Travel Asia, said: “The economy is picking up and we see a lot of Cambodians who want to travel now (as) they have never travelled outside the country before.”

Overseas trips are hence a great motivator to boost productivity among Cambodian staff, she added.

Eang Sakravy, business development manager, B2B Cambodia, said: “The neighbouring ASEAN countries have become a destination of choice for my clients.

“Thailand is number one, followed by Vietnam and Singapore.”

The ease of travel within the ASEAN region makes regional destinations a popular choice, as neighbouring countries offer visa-free entry, short flights, good food options and, most importantly, prices that are within corporates’ budgets, buyers told the *Daily*.

Destinations most requested for are major cities such as Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, while the average budget range sbetween US\$400 and US\$500 per person including airfares.

Corporate MICE groups usually number between 50 and 100 delegates, typically spending 5D/4N in a four-star hotel with a half- or one-day



Hong: Incentive a great motivator

meeting and leisure components for the remaining part.

And while South-east Asia remains the main recipient of outbound MICE groups, Cambodian players are observing a growing interest in travel farther afield to

Asia-Pacific destinations.

Sen Sereyroath, managing director of Keness Travel, who noted a bigger travel budget among her Cambodian corporate clients, commented: “In the last couple of years, my clients sent their MICE groups to ASEAN countries only. This year, we have catered for groups to Australia. They spent 8D/7N on the trip with only a half-day meeting and the rest was spent at leisure.

“Australia is not a budget destination. The cost of the trip is (almost) double that of a trip to South-east Asia,” she said.

Single ASEAN still pipe dream

By Chadamas Chinmaneevong

A mindset shift – to viewing fellow countries in ASEAN as allies instead of competitors – is critical to the successful promotion of the region as a single destination for MICE, stressed industry leaders.

Sumate Sudasna, president of Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA), speaking during the ASEAN MICE Forum on Tuesday, remarked that promoting ASEAN as a single destination would stay a pipe dream if each country continues to regard one another as rivals instead of business partners in the pursuit of MICE visitors.

The need for greater cooperation between ASEAN countries in promoting the region as one MICE destination have been extensively discussed but efforts remain scant in practice.

Urging stronger support and leadership from private sector players, Sumate said: “Apart from changing mindsets, we also need leaders of related associations to create a common business direction.

“As far as I know, only Thailand and Myanmar have associations related to MICE and tourism businesses among

the Greater Mekong countries (excluding China).”

As well, Sumate said ASEAN countries should make a serious bid in developing their own platforms to foster cooperation between the private and government sectors and step up infrastructure development.

If these countries are able to build up good private-public partnerships in their respective markets, international participation will be much easier, he added.

Sharing similar sentiments, Pornthip Hirunkate, managing director of Destination Asia Thailand, commented: “We must show the successful collaboration between

Thailand and another country to promote MICE. The success will encourage more countries to (follow suit).”

As a mature destination Thailand needs to explore new attractions to enhance its MICE status while neighbouring countries should tap the kingdom’s good accessibility to build up their fledging MICE markets, she stated.

“We must help each other. It will be a win-win situation,” she added.

Pornthip sees most potential for Thailand to join hands with

Cambodia in MICE promotion, especially as the latter is dependent on Thailand for the growth of international tourist arrivals.

Hoy Phireak, deputy director-general for the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism, shared that the Cambodian government is keen to promote the country as a tourism and MICE destination, having worked with its private sector to improve tourism infrastructure including airport expansion and upgrading accommodation standards.

Each country should assess and play up its own strengths, according to Hoy, who cited good accessibility, accommodation and tourism marketing as Thailand’s strongest suits.

But for Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, whose MICE industries are comparatively nascent, they could leverage their rich assets in cultural and historical attractions to woo more MICE events in the meantime, he suggested.

Pornthip also noted that the meetings and incentives segments present the greatest growth potential in ASEAN’s emerging economies while conventions and exhibitions are very much dependent on the MICE facilities and hospitality sector of the respective country.

Location still Hyatt’s forte

Despite encountering difficult situations like political rallies and a bomb blast in recent times, Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok is optimistic that its central city location has enabled its fast recovery and will place it in good stead to grow demand from the MICE, corporate travel and FIT markets.

Saraid Carey, the hotel’s manager for sales and marketing, said business in central Bangkok has grown steadily this year, with the Ratchaprasong area seeing an occupancy gain of four per cent.

Although new hotels like Park Hyatt Bangkok are coming online soon, Carey believes the expanded room supply in the area will only serve to underline Ratchaprasong’s status as a prime luxury hotel district as well as MICE destination.

Upkeeping its service standards as a five-star property, maximising demand and occupancy, as well as diversifying source markets are therefore the hotel’s “priority concerns” rather than the “fear of new competitors, she added.

Other challenges in luring MICE business include the increasingly short lead times for events, Casey shared. – **Chadamas Chinmaneevong**

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EDITORIAL

Karen Yue Group Editor

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena Deputy Editor, TTG Asia and TTG India

Dannon Har Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online

Paige Lee Pei Qi Assistant Editor, Singapore

Rachel AJ Lee, Yixin Ng Sub Editors

S Puvaneswary Editor, Malaysia/Brunei

Mimi Hudoyo Editor, Indonesia

Eugene Tang Photographer

Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong Creative Designers

Lina Tan Editorial Assistant

CONTRIBUTORS

Chadamas Chinmaneevong, Prudence Lui, Rohit Kaul, Julian Ryall, Rosa Ocampo, Rebecca Elliott, Feizal Samath, Marissa Carruthers, Bernie Rosenbloom, Michael Sanderson

SALES & MARKETING

Michael Chow Group Publisher

Ar-lene Lee Senior Business Manager

Pierre Quek Publisher, Online Section

Hidy Lee Business Manager

Cheryl Lim Advertisement Administration Manager

Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager

Kwek Wan Ling Marketing Executive

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TTG ASIA MEDIA

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Road to recovery

While shrinking corporate budgets and spillover global security concerns have hurt MICE sellers in Indonesia, efforts to tap mammoth inbound markets are reigniting hope for recovery, **Mimi Hudoyo** reports



Nadezda Murmakova/Shutterstock

Global events and economic conditions have weighed down MICE business into Indonesia, those interviewed said as they look to efforts by the tourism ministry and new markets to change the industry's fortunes.

Vienna Damanik, account director at Cakrawala Event Organiser, said: "The global economic downturn has affected our corporate MICE business.

"While some of our clients have (operations) in Indonesia which are doing quite well, they need to support their

slowing business in other parts of the world."

Tightened budgets have slowed growth in inbound MICE business. For example, if in the past the company had different departments having their individual meetings, these were combined into one this year, she said.

She added that budget cuts have also affected choice of destinations and venues.

Manning director of Abbey MICE, Abdullah Lajam, further noted: "We noticed corporates hesitating to spend although

the number of events are not necessarily down.

"Companies previously looking for five-star-plus, global branded hotels have gone down to four-star ones. Those (who used to book) four-star properties now look for three-star ones.

When it comes to government events, Abdullah saw that the number of events had gone up while spending declined.

Ketut Jaman, managing director of Melali MICE Bali, said: "(Governments still) spend on meetings. The number of meetings may not be down, but we do

not see much (of the larger-scale ones). (Most) events are the ones with less than 100 participants with some co-ordination meetings with up to 200 people."

Looking ahead, Abdullah said: "It is hard to (predict how business) this year will go. Factors like Brexit, the refugee (situation) in Europe, the US elections and the global economy have caused companies to freeze budgets.

Moreover, some in the global community perceive Muslim countries such as Indonesia to be dangerous. "Indonesia has to present itself as a safe and secure country, otherwise international companies will (put a) stigma (on us)."

Still, the MICE industry in Indonesia is optimistic about potential for growth.

Abdullah said: "I think the Ministry of Tourism is doing a very good job by not only promoting Bali for leisure but also pushing the budget to promote Indonesia as a MICE destination. With their support, Indonesia is looking good."

Marantha Aryaguna, general manager of Duta Citra Internusa, said: "The Ministry of Tourism has been very active in tapping the China and Russia markets," adding that these markets present great opportunity for the company.

"The problem is the lack of Russian speaking guides and guest services here."

"We have seen the Russian (leisure) market dropping (in the last couple of years) due to the ruble, but it seems that companies have started to get active in organising MICE events again," he said.

Damanik urged the government to organise more fam trips and business meetings with regional and overseas buyers.

Referring to a MICE fam trip to Jakarta and Bali organised by the Ministry of Tourism, she said: "Most buyers have business(es) in Asia but the majority of them have no information on what Indonesia has to offer, with the exception of Bali probably.

"We need more of such events to create the awareness."

On the shelves

InterContinental Jakarta MidPlaza

The hotel has relaunched its Grand Ballroom following an extensive nine-month revitalisation project. The ballroom can now host up to 1,500 guests for business events and private celebrations. It features a foyer, where guests can gather before events, and the glasshouse fills the ballroom with natural light during the day.

ilLido Bali

ilLido by renowned restaurateur Beppe De Vito made its Indonesia debut early this year with the opening of ilLido Bali.

The Italian restaurant features an outdoor courtyard flanked by a portico and a pergola. The courtyard and portico can sit 150 people comfortably while the Pergola can accommodate 24.

It has a private room with capacity for 30 people, while its bar has 30 seats.

The restaurant can comfortably accommodate a total of 200 people for sit-down events and 300 for cocktail.

Four Seasons Jakarta

The Four Seasons Jakarta opened on June 28 in Jalan Gatot Subroto within the city's CBD.

The hotel currently has four F&B outlets, a spa, a 24-hour fitness centre and an outdoor pool on the rooftop sur-

rounded by tropical landscaping.

With more than 1,800m² of flexible function space, the hotel features a Grand Ballroom which can accommodate up to 350 people for a sit-down dinner. Additional spaces include two salons on the second level and three meetings rooms on the third floor.

Teras Dharmawangsa Restaurant

Opened early this year, the four-storey restaurant is located in the upmarket Darmawangsa Square City Walk, South Jakarta.

The main part of the restaurant is located on the first three floors, each with 30 to 40 seats. Each floor has a

different concept and serves Indonesian and Asian comfort food.

The top floor can accommodate private functions and meetings for between 30 and 40 people.

The Westin Jakarta

The 272-room Westin Jakarta opened in August, occupying the 50th to 69th floor of the tallest building in Indonesia, Gama Tower.

Westin Jakarta will also introduce more than 3,000m² of event space, including a pillarless grand ballroom with maximum capacity for 1,200 guests and eight meeting rooms.

The hotel has four F&B outlets.



Four Seasons Jakarta Premiere Suite

Viewpoints

What will you be doing differently to help your business succeed in the year forward?"



John Nainggolan,
director, **Jona Convexindo**

There is a growing market for mid-tier corporate MICE events in Indonesia.

So far we have been catering to the high-end (market) but we also need to tap the mid-market segments.



Ketut Jaman,
managing director, **Melali MICE Bali**

We are diversifying our business by opening a new division providing

equipment support. We are investing in equipment like sound system and lighting. On the one hand, providing these equipment for rent (would create) a new source of income. On the other, we can start to rely on our equipment for our own events.

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A brighter future ahead

Mixed bag of views on 2016 MICE performance but trade players are confident of a great 2017 once new products open in Macau and provide clients with far more options. **Prudence Lui** reports



A-Ma Temple, Macau

Macau experienced a slight decline in the number of business events and delegates in attendance in 1Q2016. The destination welcomed 191 events, of which 187 were meetings, down 14 from the same period last year. Participant numbers dipped 28.7 per cent to 15,457 people.

Unfazed, a Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) spokes-

man told *TTG Show Daily*: “The long-term prospects are very good because of the growing number and diversity of new hotels, venues and products for the business events market in Macau.

“Our marketing clout and profile is rising rapidly (and) our recent successes in attracting large-scale business events are demonstrating our capacity for mega events.”

The spokesperson pointed out that

with room inventory hitting 50,000 in the coming years, increased focus on MICE by the industry and improved accessibility, “Macau is well positioned to become the mega events city” of Asia.

He added: “The continued investment in luxury hotels and services also positions Macau well for the high-end corporate and incentive market.”

Still, IPIM makes it clear that its challenge now is to broaden the appeal of Macau and move it away from being seen solely as a gaming destination.

“Macau’s climb in international rankings for conventions and exhibitions by ICCA and UFI would suggest that Macau is coming of age as a business events destination. There is more to do, however, to encourage industry collaboration and engagement in the promotion and attraction of non gaming business,” said the spokesperson.

Expressing less optimism over Macau’s MICE prospects this year is Peter Hassall, managing director with MCI Macau, who has witnessed “very slow” business in 1H2016 and is not expecting the remaining half of the year to be “much better”.

Hassall observed a significant drop in corporate meetings and conferences.

He remarked: “The conferences that are coming through are very budget-orientated and (want only) the basics and no bells and whistles. The larger pieces of business we have seen in the past are

also not returning.

“Macau may have lost its shine for the moment. I believe that Macau really needs to step up its transport infrastructure to make it easier (for overseas delegates) to get to here.”

That said, Hassall believes Macau’s MICE sector will see a more positive picture in 2017 when the new integrated resorts open.

“(Having more choices) will absolutely assist tourism,” he quipped.

“It will, however, also mean greater competition (in the marketplace). The new integrated resorts will attract some new business and also take away (existing ones) from others in the city.”

Meanwhile, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central and The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central have reported a strong first half of the year.

General manager of sales and marketing, Daniella Tonetto, said: “Macau continues to attract regional and international groups due to the size and flexibility of our meetings spaces, international service standards and ease of travel options.

“We need to make the most of the short-lead business trend that we are facing and ensure our turnaround is fast. Also, there is continuous strong interest from IT, consulting and direct selling companies. In terms of new emerging markets, both India and South Korea are promising.”

Viewpoints

What will you be doing differently to help your business succeed in the year forward?



Bruno Simoes, CEO, smallWorld Experience

We will be investing more and more in video content to promote

our products, services and experience. As in past years, we are constantly searching for and creating new services. We are also expanding to markets that are not pegged to the US dollar, which at present is over-valued.



Eric Chan, executive director, Air Cruise Travel

Given the business slowdown, I would encourage my staff to advance themselves by taking up related courses or enjoy a break during this quiet period. I hope, in return, we could come up with some fresh ideas as the existing products have been around for many years.



From left: The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central; Anim’Arte Nam Van



On the shelves

eVent Portfolio and Handy

Starwood Hotels and Resort’s Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel and The St Regis Macao have introduced a new mobile tool which streamlines the event planning process by facilitating communication and organising all correspondence in an easy-to-use web-based application. Named eVent Portfolio, the tool also enables collaboration between events and sales teams.

The two hotels have also implemented Handy phones in guestrooms. These phones allow for free international calls to Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, the US and India.

The Parisian Macao Hotel

Opened in mid-September 2016, The Parisian Macao Hotel houses 3,000

guestrooms, a collection of meeting spaces totalling 5,200m², and other facilities.

The 3,400m² Parisian Ballroom can be divided into three junior ballrooms. There are also five meetings rooms, two boardrooms, a business centre and outdoor function spaces such as the observation decks on levels seven and 37 of its half-size recreation of the Eiffel Tower.

Taipa Village Art Space

A two-storey traditional shophouse in Taipa has reopened as an exhibition centre in September, offering 74m² of space that can support small-scale functions like workshops and seminars with up to 30 pax.

Taipa Village Art Space’s allure is its location in a heritage hub in Macau. It sits opposite of Casa de Tapas and will be attractive to events associated

with architectural preservation, cultural heritage, eco-tourism as well as related sustainability topics.

Anim’Arte Nam Van

Launched in June, this new area at Nam Van Lake combines sports, arts and culture to keep visitors busy. There are creative shops to peruse, a weekend craft market to visit, weekend cultural performances and activities to partake in, and swan-shaped pedal boats to rent for a fun ride. And when a rest is required, head to the café run by the Institute for Tourism Studies.

El Gielo

This new outdoor lounge is Pacha Macau’s latest gem. The venue has six cabanas with 120 seats and offers access to Studio City hotel’s pool, making it the perfect party central for holidaymakers as well as event planners.

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Japan wins planners' affection

Japan's MICE game is strong, catalysed by keen traveller interest in the country, publicity stemming from the Tokyo 2020 games, event support from the government, and other factors, writes **Kathryn Wortley**



Vibrant streets of Akihabara, Tokyo

The future looks bright for Japan's tourism industry; the government's target to welcome 20 million foreign visitors annually by 2020 is already within reach.

According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), inbound tourists totalled 17.9 million in 2015, a 47.3 per cent increase on the previous year. The growth has been attributed to the weaker yen, relaxed visa requirements for South-East Asian countries, and increased airline routes.

Encouraged by the strong performance, the government in March doubled the target to 40 million.

Tokyo was ranked sixth in the top 10 Asia-Pacific cities based on meeting and event activities, in the *American Express Meetings & Events Destination Analysis* published in September 2015.

More can be expected from Japan, especially with the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. New initiatives are underway to improve the

country's MICE sector.

According to Elena Bychenkova-Maliouguina of Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau (TCVB), the Games are boosting Tokyo's brand as "the place to meet," with enquiries from event planners up on last year.

"The infrastructure to welcome international guests is sure to advance, including the usability of public transportation, signage at tourist attractions, and Internet connections throughout the city," she said.

TCVB is offering financial support for certain groups as well as gifts, entertainment or a welcome at the airport. Feedback from planners and delegates is reportedly positive, and plans are under way to continue this form of assistance this year and beyond.

Tokyo will also host "an impressive number of international conferences throughout the year," Bychenkova-Maliouguina added.

Similarly, JNTO has adopted new projects this fiscal year to support MICE.

These include opening national facilities to the public, expanding facilities for conventions and exhibitions, and supporting international companies.

"The Japan Travel Agency started a support programme (in July) so more unique venues could be utilised," explained JNTO's Ayae Sasaki.

Event planners that satisfy the requirements will get help to use these venues, while national guest houses, previously solely used for ceremonies, may now be used for business events, providing conditions are met.

While Sasaki admits that making available national facilities is "a big challenge" due to regulations, she said "the promotion of unique venues and government networks and support are the main themes within our vision".

MICE business is blooming even in Hokkaido, far from Tokyo and loved by leisure travellers for its white winters and summer flower fields.

"Looking at nature, whatever the season, gives people on MICE trips a feel-

ing of total well-being," remarked Acme Wu of Hokkaido Tourism Management, operator of hotel Ki Niseko. Outdoor activities, such as rafting and hiking, he added, are excellent for teambuilding.

Earlier this year, the company welcomed a group of 70 Scandinavian professionals: one of a number of groups that used the hotel's complete services, including conference room, restaurants, hot spring, massage treatments and access to ski slopes.

The hotel's popularity is reflected in its occupancy, which in winter, stood at 90 to 100 per cent.

High hotel demand is a problem nationwide. According to Savills World Research, Japan hotel occupancy was 83.7 per cent in 2015. To combat this problem, the government in June said that it would let hotel operators add 50 per cent to their floor space. Several major hotels are scheduled to open by 2020 and, according to JNTO's Sasaki, many existing hotels are "starting major renovations to make guests' stays more comfortable".

Viewpoints

What will you be doing differently to help your business succeed in the coming year?



James Kent, sales & marketing manager, The J Team DMC Co.

The J Team DMC has an industry-wide reputation for bringing the most creative and innovative suggestions to event management. We are enjoying the challenge to stay at the leading-edge as new entrants introduce healthy competition. Our strategy for making a difference this year is enhancing and deepening the human touch during events.



Jarrod Stenhouse, managing director, Destination Asia Japan

While growth from our traditional source markets remains strong, this financial year we will also be looking at increasing our presence in emerging markets, including Latin America and the Middle East, where we see great potential.

On the shelves

Hoshinoya Tokyo

Opened in July, Hoshinoya Tokyo is a luxury ryokan in the capital's financial area, close to Tokyo Station and the Imperial Palace. The 17-storey hotel promises "personal space and time of unparalleled luxury, food and service that convey the highest level of hospitality infused with local culture and the natural environment".

Guestrooms feature tatami, futon, bathtubs and an open-air hot spring.

A reception room with free Wi-Fi, on the second floor, is available for business guests and small business groups.

Tokyo Sky Tree

Tokyo Sky Tree, the world's tallest tower, is offering special tickets for international visitors. The Fast Skytree Ticket gives holders quick access to Tembo Deck and Tembo Galleria on the 350th and 450th floors respectively.

At 634m tall, the attraction offers views of Tokyo – and even Mount Fuji

in fine weather – as well as shops, cafes and restaurants.

The pass is sold at an exclusive ticket counter on the fourth floor.

The Prince Gallery

Starwood's The Luxury Collection has opened The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho in central Tokyo. Occupying the 30th to 36th floors of the Kioi Tower, the property is a hotel with a view and facilities that include specialty restaurants, an indoor pool, a spa and a meeting room for up to 24 people. Projection and touch panel display equipment are available.

The Classic House at Akasaka Prince

The Classic House at Akasaka Prince has been restored to its original condition when it was constructed in 1930. Designed by the former Ministry of the Imperial Household Imperial Works Bureau Engineering Department, the building was recognised as a Tangible Cultural Property in 2011.

The building features a range of facilities suitable for business events,



including a French restaurant, a banquet hall, a cafe, a bar and a courtyard.

Hato Bus

See the best of Yokohama on an easy bus tour. The day tour run by Hato Bus starts off at Sky Garden on the 69th floor of the Yokohama Landmark Tower. Participants can then dine in Chinatown

– the largest in Asia – before exploring Hakkeijima Sea Paradise on Yokohama Bay. This new-generation amusement park features an aquarium, Japan's first surf coaster that swings over the ocean, a marina, a hotel, restaurants, and shops. The tour also calls at Mitsui Outlet Park before returning to Tokyo Station.

Racing on slow and steady

MICE growth this year has been modest for Hong Kong and the business outlook is cautious, but trade players believe that perks and fresh ideas will help them win the race. By **Prudence Lui**

Overnight MICE arrivals into Hong Kong in 2Q2016 rose a modest 3.4 per cent year-on-year to cross the 828,000 mark, according to data from the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb). However, the tourism bureau is satisfied with the interim result, given the persistent global market turbulence forecasted for 2016.

HKTb has chosen to regard the rest of the year's performance with "cautious optimism". Executive director, Anthony Lau, explained: "Hong Kong is situated in a prime location within the fast growing Asia-Pacific region (where) business travel demand (is high)."

Lau shared that his team will be focusing on "a few of our strategic markets to drive growth".

Dora Liu, vice president of sales with Regal Hotels International, opined that early bird MICE offers and service enhancements are "key strategies to stand out in such a competitive market today".

Liu said: "The overall MICE performance is below expectations, mainly due to the unstable global economic and political situations. Some companies have tightened travel expenses or trimmed frequency of travel. Competitors from surrounding destinations, like Singapore and Macau, have introduced many offers to lure event organisers."

As such, her company is in support of HKTb's *Hong Kong Rewards!* programme that is geared towards business event planners and delegates.

Besides event perks, creative and flexible concepts are also needed for Hong Kong to remain an attractive



MICE destination.

Karen Kwan, business solutions and events director with Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, shared with *TTG Show Daily* that the resort's exclusive dates for whole-park buyout in September were snapped up rapidly.

In June, a US travel club booked the entire resort for an event attended by 6,000 delegates from all over Asia. Guests were treated to a Star Wars experience.

Kwan said, "Although the economic prospects remain uncertain, we have seen growing demand across many business sectors, including education, insurance, healthcare, telecommunications and direct selling. The steady and promising growth of our MICE business is in line with our plan."

"To meet the growing demand for unique MICE experiences, the resort has stepped up marketing efforts and

expanded our network in the region to strengthen the awareness of our resort's MICE capacity and capabilities."

On the exhibitions front, Hong Kong is facing an enviable problem of demand outstripping venue space supply.

Monica Lee-Müller, managing director of Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC), said: "The use of space is expected to remain high due to growth in recurring exhibitions and demand for new business. A number of recurring trade exhibitions have reached the capacity of HKCEC's purpose built exhibition space, i.e. 66,000m². Several others are expected to achieve that scale within the next few years."

And as client events grow, Lee-Müller shared that HKCEC also needed to provide more well trained and competent F&B service staff as well as stronger information communication technologies.

Not one to stagnant in the face of

Viewpoints

How will you drive your business forward in the coming year?"

Katerina Tam, director, International Conference Consultants

As a PCO, our success depends very much on our clients' level of satisfaction with our services. Therefore, we always strive to provide value-added services, such as dedicated personal attention to our clients' conferences and looking for quality event venues and free marketing and promotion opportunities.



Christo Diamandopoulos, general manager, Regal Kowloon Hotel

We will concentrate on the 'business of hospitality instead of the 'hospitality business'.

Our themed breakouts, MICE app, new LED wall and associates are all in place to deliver an event experience with good old hospitality. This will make business successful and rewarding.

limited space, Lee-Müller said HKCEC is seeing "opportunities in holding more exhibitions of niche topics, such as organic food, cloud technology applications etc, as well as exhibitions of luxury services and products".

"We are actively targeting these events to meet the growing market demand and expand our event and client portfolios," she said.

On the shelves

New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel

Renovations at the former Hotel Nikko Hongkong are close to completion. Now bearing the name New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel, the property on Mody Road in Tsim Sha Tsui East has so far unveiled a new lobby, a selected number of refurbished guestrooms and restaurants, as well as the new and improved Event Room. Works on the lobby lounge and the rest of the hotel's event venues are still underway.

Maison Eight

Newly-opened Maison Eight in Tsim Sha Tsui specialises in French cuisine and innovative cocktails, and offers various zones that are perfect venues for themed events. One notable zone is Le Club 1829, the first Bollinger Champagne room in the world. It can seat 18 guests and comes with a terrace. Other interesting venues include Salvatore at Maison Eight which can accommodate a 220 pax cocktail party and The Salon which has 30 seats.

SKYE

Following a massive makeover, Park Lane Hong Kong, a Pullman Hotel

unveiled on September 1 a new rooftop dining destination – SKYE.

Helmed by chef Lee Adams who has honed his culinary skills at Michelin-starred outlets, SKYE's menu showcases contemporary French cuisine. The restaurant seats up to 180 people, and offers three private rooms and a large outdoor deck.

Kerry Hotel

The 545-key Kerry Hotel is set to open in December 2016 on the Hung Hom waterfront. It will boast the largest collection of hotel event and catering facilities in Hong Kong. MICE inventory includes a 1,756m² Grand Ballroom, 17 flexible meeting venues that can accommodate 30 to 660 guests, plus various indoor and outdoor areas.

Other facilities include The Club Lounge, an outdoor swimming pool, a 24-hour fitness centre and retail shops.

New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel

Renovations at the former Hotel Nikko Hongkong are close to completion. Now bearing the name New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel, the property in Tsim Sha Tsui East has so far unveiled a new lobby, a selected number of refurbished guestrooms and restaurants, as well as the new and improved Event

Room. Works on the lobby lounge and other event venues are still underway.

Sonic Garden

Hotel sáv in Hung Hom has uplifted the vibes at its Sonic Garden, turning



From above: Sonic Garden; Maison Eight

A party to feed

As more dining functions become an integral part of the complete business event, convention centres must perfect their F&B operations to satiate demanding organisers. We find out what the new needs are and which centres in Asia are muscling up their culinary creativity and catering prowess. By **Karen Yue**, with inputs from **Rebecca Elliott**, **Paige Lee Pei Qi**, **S Puvaneswary**, **Mimi Hudoyo**, **Rosa Ocampo**, **Prudence Lui**

Convention centres have for years recognised the need to be more than a provider of event space. The more competitive ones have invested in technology to enhance event organisers' delivery of events and delegates' experience, in sustainable capabilities to reduce their environmental impact and at the same time, satisfy a growing number of clients who prefer to work with green partners, and in building a team of event specialists who can add another dimension of operational support for their clients, among other areas.

Now, convention centres in Asia are sharpening yet another aspect of their service delivery – food and beverage.

Bruce Winton, general manager of the new Marriott Grand Ballroom (MGB), a convention centre that opened last year which has already earned a reputation for being one of the Philippines' largest convention venues for up to 5,000 pax, said this evolution is necessary for convention centres to do well going forward.

"In this age, organisers favour one-stop-shop kind of venues that hotels have an advantage in. Gone are the days that a function room will be offered bare; requirements are now built-in. Organisers' considerations are highly dependent on the venue's completeness against their checklist. Innovation is top of mind when it comes to catering, lighting and sound equipment, event coordination, room accommodation, etc," remarked Winton.

It is this need for a complete service that renders a basic catering service at convention centres obsolete today.

Convention centre chiefs opined that the new importance placed on quality dining functions within a larger business event stemmed from organisers' need to deliver a strong and memorable overall experience for their delegates.

Renato Padilla, general manager of Philippine International Convention Centre (PICC) in Manila, said: "With the goal of mounting uniquely creative



Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre boasts the largest kitchen in the Southern Hemisphere and a 'made fresh in house by hand' food philosophy

and memorable events, organisers and clients are more demanding (about) the quality and variety of food and service."

"Even corporate functions are becoming themed events. We have to be prepared with an inventory of chairs, linens, flatware and décor to match the clients' desired theme. On certain occasions, even the food servers have to dress to the theme," added Padilla.

Food is now an "integral part of events" and not just a secondary consideration for event organisers, according to Arun Madhok, CEO of Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre.

"Event attendees have come to expect good food and organisers are looking past traditional catering (to focus on) innovative experiential dining concepts to complement their event themes," he said.

Adelaide Convention Centre CEO, Alec Gilbert, agree. "Planners are aware that food and beverage can be the maker or breaker of large-scale events, and the importance of getting it right and providing a unique experience is paramount," he said.

A taste of the destination

Adelaide Convention Centre has been seeing an uptick in requests for customised

menus and a need for menu design to be themed, often based on the uniqueness of local produce.

Gilbert said: "When (event guests) taste our food, it may be the first opportunity they have had to taste the produce and wines from South Australia. As a centre, we provide the window to what the state has to offer, and therefore it is important that we do it right. Guests are looking beyond the menu and wanting to learn something about the food, culture and traditions of the host destination."

Suntec Singapore's Madhok has also noticed a growing appetite for local favourites to satiate "delegates who may not be able to experience the local culture due to their tight schedule (during the event period)". The centre is able to include traditional *teh tarik* (pulled milk tea), for instance, in the menu at clients' request.

Colin Yeoh, group director of F&B operations, Sunway Hotels & Resorts Malaysia, which manages the Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre within the Sunway Resort City, noted that requests from event organisers to "feature and prepare local cuisine and present it in novel and creative ways" are on the rise.

"Their intention is to showcase the di-

versity in Malaysian cuisine and to create unique delegate experiences," Yeoh said.

He added that Sunway's culinary team is also capable of creating "enticing menu selections with an array of Malaysian, regional Asian, Middle Eastern and Western cuisine that will take diners to a special place and time, one plate at a time".

"We need to provide the theatre. Live cooking stations, (event themes) with respect to food presentation and furniture, visual effects through lighting and customisation of menus are designed to provide that unique experience."

Alec Gilbert

CEO, Adelaide Convention Centre

More servings of interaction please

Convenient dining options are in demand, discovered Marina Bay Sands' (MBS) executive chef, Christopher Christie, as organisers and event delegates seek to pack more networking opportunities into the programme.

"As networking plays a pivotal role in every meeting, we see a growing demand for easy grab-and-go snack items," Christie said.

To address this need, Christie and his team will set up themed pop-up cafes within the convention centre, an arrangement that allows delegates to network while filling their tummies.

Sharing the same observations, Adelaide Convention Centre's Gilbert said "there is less of the three-course, sit-down menu and more techniques being employed in the menu designed to stimulate interaction among delegates".

Besides connecting with one another, delegates at dining functions are also increasingly desiring interaction with the kitchen, found Peter Haycroft, executive chef at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

He said: "They are very interested in where their food has come from, how it is cooked and how it is served. This led us to invest in live cooking stations."

Diverse diets

Dining events at convention centres are becoming more complex, a change catalysed by an increasingly diverse event audience with different dietary requirements and preferences.

The kitchens of convention centres must now accommodate dietary preferences, not just dietary restrictions.

"Healthy options – as opposed to dietary requirements – will be very popular this year," said MCEC's Haycroft.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Malaysia, which has been fielding more requests for healthy dishes and beverages, has started to include a wide selection of such options in its banquet menus, Day Conference Packages, TenOnCall offerings and public catering outlets, revealed executive chef, Richmond Lim.

In 2015, Adelaide Convention Centre introduced a new food philosophy: *Soils and Seasons*. It was designed to tell the story of South Australia's farmers, fishers, growers and wine makers, which Gilbert said was helping to build the centre's reputation around the world.

The new International Convention



From left: Adelaide Convention Centre offers South Australian wines to introduce delegates to the local food culture; Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center serves up local specialties at dining events



From left: The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali provides unique dinner venues to business events hosted at the Bali International Convention Centre next door; Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre, part of the larger Sunway Resort City, is able to offer unique dining venue options to event planners

Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) unveiled its own food philosophy too this February. *Feeding your Performance* promises to feed its event delegates fresh, healthy food to nourish the body and mind.

CEO Geoff Donaghy said executive chef Tony Panetta had worked with nutritionists and regional suppliers in New South Wales to develop an “industry-first approach to cuisine”.

The new food philosophy spans ICC Sydney’s retail outlets and events.

At PICC, requests for halal, kosher, vegetarian, gluten-free and nut-free meals “are not uncommon”, according to Padilla.

“As many events now have a diverse delegate profile, and lifestyle choices have evolved with the times, organisers now ask for a variety of meal choices that were not usually requested for in previous years,” said Padilla.

When the new Marriott Grand Ballroom was built, it included 15 kitchens to support each event space and to satisfy the growing need for quality food options of a wide-ranging variety. These kitchens are staffed by a multiracial team to ensure authentic flavours. It will soon have a halal certified kitchen to support the increasing number of events from the Muslim community.

Besides requests for foods prepared with less cream and fat, some organisers are also enquiring about sustainable food options, noted Yasinta Hartawan, general manager-operations of Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center.

Celebrity status

The plethora of cooking TV shows and expansion of celebrity chef restaurants across the world are influencing how people dine and raising their expectations of dining events they attend.

Sharing his observations with the *Daily*, Gilbert, said: “Both clients and delegates are becoming far more discerning in terms of the quality and presentation of meals. Expectations are much higher and the lines between quality function catering and restaurant a la carte catering are blurring.”

He believes that the “prevalance of cooking shows on TV and the rise of celebrity chefs” are effecting these changes in dining function requirements, and noted that convention centres today must be proactive partners with the client in order to create a successful event.

Richmond Lim, executive chef at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Malaysia, agrees, saying: “Some organisers want us to replicate the taste of dishes they personally like at fine dining restaurants for their banquet event.”

Lim added: “But it is not that simple to replicate because fine dining restaurants usually cook for 60 to 80 people, whereas banquets at the centre may

be for up to 6,000 pax for a sit-down dinner or 12,000 for a standing buffet. We have to be able to deliver food at the right speed, time and temperature.”

“Holding events – especially branded ones – in restaurants and bars have become more fashionable compared to banquet halls (in convention centres) which will need additional decoration to create an atmosphere.”

Alexander Dietzsch

EAM food & beverage,
The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali

Varied venues

The quest for a spectacular dining experience is also impacting organisers’ choice of venue.

For convention centres that are part of an integrated development complete with hotels and attractions, such a request can be easily satisfied.

“There is a growing trend for organisers with more than two consecutive days of events at the centre to look for dining venues (elsewhere),” said Yeoh.

“With all our facilities – the convention centre, three hotels, theme park and Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall – all within walking distance and linked by covered walkways, we are able to offer convenience and comfort to organisers and take away the hassle of planning transportation for medium- and large-scale events,” he said.

Meetings have been hosted on Sunway Lagoon’s man-made beach and the mall’s skating rink.

“Our F&B team always promote our hotel venues to clients (who desire alternative venues to convention centre ballrooms,” said Alexander Dietzsch, executive assistant manager food & beverage of The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, which manages the Bali International Convention Centre next door.

“We have created customised packages for all our hotel venues. We frequently have corporate groups joining our Sunday Brunch when their meetings fall over a weekend,” Dietzsch added.

Business events taking place at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, part of the MBS integrated resort, can utilise the complex’s impressive collection of 10 celebrity chef restaurants.

Christie said: “Our clients can choose to host their networking events over celebrity chef dine-arounds where guests can taste multiple award-winning flavours in a single night, or commis-

sion a celebrity chef to create a menu for a sit-down dinner.

“Our clients recognise that when they do an event at MBS, it is not just an event space or technical expertise that we can provide, but a holistic end-to-end experience which includes creating culinary magic when needed.”

“Having the option to dine pool-side or at the lagoon at The Venetian Macao is as important as the food we offer,” remarked Gene Capuano, vice president of convention and exhibition operations.

To keep meeting groups on site, Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center, which is not part of a mixed-used complex, has resorted to pitching its public spaces. Taman Jepun, a courtyard sandwiched between halls one and two, is an ideal venue for a Balinese-themed dinner or reception. “Its green surroundings, architecture and the Balinese gate make a dramatic backdrop for any event,” said Hartawan.

PICC chooses to take advantage of its vast grounds – a rarity in Manila – by adding a second outdoor venue, The Garden, to support afternoon and sundown gatherings. The Garden offers 2,946m² of space with 47 plant species, park benches and a centre-piece koi pond. PICC’s other outdoor venue is The Courtyard.

“We believe a memorable culinary experience should go beyond just tastes and flavours. (It should) satisfy the five senses to make an impactful impression.”

Richmond Lim

Executive chef,
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre



Marina Bay Sands promises an end-to-end experience including delivering culinary excellence; the ASEAN Para Games closing ceremony was held at the integrated resort’s convention centre

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Choose the location and style that suits you best: Chatrium Hotel Riverside Bangkok, a multi award-winning riverside property; Chatrium Residence Sathorn Bangkok, a city oasis just minutes from the CBD; five-star Emporium Suites by Chatrium at the epicentre of shopping, dining and great entertainment; or Maitria Hotel Sukhumvit 18, the place to stay savvy amid some of the city’s best shopping and dining hotspots. Further afield, Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon is one of Myanmar’s few heritage hotels. Join us to “Live the Remarkable.”

Contact: group.corporate@chatrium.com

Hotel Equatorial Penang, Malaysia

Hotel Equatorial Penang seeks to craft a memorable experience by introducing an open and spacious design coupled with a lush tropical garden, right at your doorstep. Hotel Equatorial Penang has 662 guestrooms and suites accompanied by the largest ballroom on the island, making it the ideal conference and dream wedding destination.

Blending the need of both a business stay and a relaxing getaway, Hotel Equatorial Penang offers spacious rooms, refined culinary cuisines, and recreational and wellness facilities.

Hotel Equatorial Penang is a one-stop luxury conference and accommodation resort and our well-trained team delivers genuine and personalised services. Visitors to IT&CM Asia 2016 can expect a host of promotions, group offers and value-added services.



Monaco Government Tourist Bureau Asia, Singapore

A legend began when the Grand Casino and the Hotel de Paris opened in 1863, marking a turning point in the long history of the Principality. Monaco had invented Monte Carlo... and 150 years later the legend lives on. A gem on the world scene, Monaco is prestigious, glamorous, elegant and romantic. It has been, and still is the epitome of luxury travel.

From world-class hotels to Michelin-star restaurants, historic landmarks to the internationally-recognised Grimaldi Forum Convention Center, Monaco is truly your ideal meetings and incentive destination. Be captivated by the scenic view of the Mediterranean Sea with the Alps as a backdrop. Be dazzled by spectacular events all year round, with the International Circus Festival, Formula One Grand Prix and Monaco Yacht Show shifting the spotlight towards Monaco.

Nestled between the French and the Italian rivieras, its ideal location in the heart of Europe, its accessibility, Mediterranean climate, security and exemplary economic drive put Monaco onto the world stage with high regard.

Join us in our first ever appearance at the ITCMA Bangkok in 2016! Find out everything that makes the second smallest country in the world so amazingly incredible! Lots of surprises await you!

Contact: b.baduffle@horusdvcs.com

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts Thailand, Thailand

Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok is a deluxe business hotel with 380 newly renovated guestrooms and resort-style facilities, and is conveniently linked via Sky Bridge to two Skytrain stations. It is also the ideal hotel for MICE events in Bangkok as it offers 14 versatile event facilities.

Meanwhile, the 213-room Hyatt Regency Hua Hin offers family-friendly resort facilities, an award-winning destination spa, The Barai, and MICE facilities set in a relaxing setting.



Chiangmai Grandview Hotel, Thailand

Chiangmai Grandview Hotel & Convention Center is a one-stop-destination venue for all leisure, corporate and MICE travellers located a mere 10-minute drive from the airport. Our 200-room hotel is centrally located in the heart of Chiang Mai, close to attractions, shopping centres, the Old City, Doi Suthep temple and the upscale Nimmanhaemin Road. Our Convention Center is the largest and most modern facility of its kind in town. It can seat up to 2,200 persons, and is perfect for meetings, conferences, exhibitions or banqueting needs.

Sapporo Convention Bureau, Japan

Sapporo, the capital of Japan’s northernmost Hokkaido Prefecture, has surely been grabbing the attention of world’s travellers, with Hokkaido having been named the No.1 Best in Asia destination in 2016 by Lonely Planet.

A crystal clear sky, a cool and refreshing climate, breathtaking and ever-changing seasonal landscapes, as well as local delicacies captivate not only travellers but also MICE planners.

Sapporo boasts the enviable combination of city life and nature. The former host of the Winter Olympics, it is now set to hold the Asian Winter Games in February 2017, which is expected to attract a record attendance of around 1,500 athletes from approximately 30 countries and regions.

Sapporo offers nature, a wide choice of hotels and exclusive resorts, and boasts a superb landscape – which was selected as one of the Three Great Night Views of Japan – for MICE events.

Contact: kurosawa-a@plaza-sapporo.or.jp

Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit Asoke, Thailand

Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit is located in the heart of Sukhumvit, and is a short walk from the BTS skytrain Asoke Station, and MRT subway, Sukhumvit Station.

The hotel offers a total of 325 spacious rooms that come with walk-in showers and bathtubs. It can also play host to a wide range of meetings thanks to its 2,000m² of flexible meeting space which includes two ballrooms and nine meeting rooms. Other facilities include a spa, two restaurants, one coffee shop, and a bar.

The hotel also provides easy access to Bangkok’s famous shopping spots such as Emporium, EmQuartier, Terminal 21, Siam Paragon, Platinum Fashion Mall, and the two hospitals Bumrungrad Hospital and Bangkok Hospital.

Contact: dbd@pullmanbangkokgrandesukhumvit.com

InterContinental & Holiday Inn Bangkok, Thailand

Ideally situated for both business and leisure travellers, our hotels occupy a prime location at the centre of the city’s business and commercial districts. The dedicated exhibition area can hold a capacity of up to 1,800 guests cocktail-style or 750 banquet-style, and is complemented by a total of 22 spacious, versatile ballrooms and function rooms. Combined there are 760 guestrooms available, and both hotels afford our guests with the flexibility and choices to suit their requirements.

Past events held include the World Dental Congress in September 2015, and the Entrepreneurs’ Organization Global Leadership Conference in May 2016.

Contact: sarocho.tongklin@ihg.com

Indonesia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, Indonesia

Why Choose Indonesia? The correct question is: why not?

A seasoned player in handling business events, Indonesia has played host to many world class events such as the successful 2013 APEC CEO Summit, The 2013 Miss World, The 2015 Asia Africa Conference, and The Sixth Asia Pacific Urban Forum in 2015.

Universally known as a tourist destination, Indonesia now offers you seven destinations that bring you to diverse industrial sectors. Feel the newfangled ambience in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar, and experience the zestful culture in Bali, Yogyakarta, Medan, and Bandung.

We are excited to host your events! A great number of convention centres, accessible transport, comfortable accommodation, delectable food, newly established airports, and authentic natural beauty for your incentive programme needs are waiting for you here!

Established in March 2016, Indonesia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (INACEB) hopes to make Indonesia the first choice for your business events. INACEB will help present your events in Indonesia by equipping you with details of each destination and its venues, accommodation, transportation and tourist attractions. All up-to-the-minute information and services are provided at no cost.

Come, visit, and partner with us. We will make your events the talk of the city.

Mövenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket, Thailand

The Mövenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket offers 250 rooms and suites in the main building, and 113 villas. The property has a 759m² pillarless Grand Ballroom, which is one of the biggest meeting venues in Phuket, and 11 breakout rooms.

The property has hosted many successful events such as BMW, Nu Skin, Novartis, and NIQ Health Care from Australia, all of which prove that we provide quality products and services, and are able to deliver to your conference.

Contact: Sutasinee.Denpairojsak@movenpick.com

Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong Hotel, Thailand

Having established a striking presence in Bangkok's city centre, the Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong Hotel, a Marriott Luxury & Lifestyle Hotel, embodies a five-star luxury.

The best of Bangkok is just outside our doors, while our hotel offers a serene respite from the city's buzz. Spread over 33 floors, our 322 modern guestrooms and suites feature plush bedding, spa-like bathrooms, flatscreen TVs, and stunning city views.

For those planning a wedding or business conference, consider utilising our 1,858m² venue space or tap into the services of our seasoned special events team. Chart your own adventure in Bangkok from the five-star comfort of our hotel.



Seoul Tourism Organisation, South Korea

The Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Seoul Tourism Organization have launched a new sightseeing and transportation card for foreign tourists. The new Discover Seoul Pass is a one-day pass for foreign tourists which allows entry to 16 of Seoul's top attractions such as the royal palaces and museums. The pass also functions as a T-money public transportation card which can be used on Seoul's subways, buses, taxis, and even certain convenience and retail stores.

Also, qualified events are now eligible for customised guided MICE Tours that offer attendees an in-depth look at Seoul's historic sites, cultural attractions and related industries.

These expanded support services join a range of other existing programmes including bidding support, unique venue search and site inspections. For promotional support, the city offers Seoul Welcome Kits for delegates, a complimentary welcome message at Incheon International Airport, and subsidies the use of trained MICE Supporters who can provide logistical and operational support during events.

For more information about Seoul's support programmes and services for business events, as well as information about the Seoul Convention Bureau, come visit us at booth number B3 or visit our homepage at www.miceseoul.com.

Novotel Bangkok Ploenchit Sukhumvit, Thailand

Novotel Bangkok Ploenchit Sukhumvit was recently awarded the 2016 Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor and rated the best value hotel in Bangkok by our guests!

The hotel is in an excellent location and provides easy access to major roads and shopping malls. Featuring 370 guestrooms, facilities include all-day dining The SQUARE restaurant, a relaxing beer garden, a well-equipped fitness centre with sauna, an outdoor swimming pool, and free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel.

Contact: Sitthidej.CHIRAPANDA@accor.com



Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore

Our venues are not only unique, they give delegates space to wind down, build up team spirit or spark creative thoughts.

Take this opportunity to transport your delegates out of the ordinary and into world-class attractions to keep them energised. From luxurious hotels to attractions such as Universal Studios Singapore™, S.E.A. Aquarium and Adventure Cove Waterpark, your attendees will truly experience unforgettable excitement as well as enjoy fantastic entertainment, shopping and amazing catering options. Or they can sail back in time through Asia's maritime history at the Maritime Experiential Museum that affords a breathtaking view of the harbour.

Swiss-Garden International, Malaysia

Discover an exclusive Swiss-Garden MICE deal when you visit us at our booth this year in Bangkok for IT&CM Asia 2016. This deal is customised specifically for group travellers with a booking period till March 2017, while travelling period is until March 2018. Swiss-Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns currently manages and operates 11 hotels and resorts – with an inventory of over 2,800 rooms – in prime locations in Malaysia and Australia.

Contact: norzam.meorhashim@swissgarden.com

Ramada Plaza Bangkok Menam Riverside, Thailand

The 525-key hotel features 22 function rooms with the capacity to cater from 10 to 500 delegates at any one time, and it includes two spacious ballrooms with exceptional views of the river. The hotel incorporates the latest audiovisual technology and has a selection of tailor-made event menus and ample parking space.

Moreover, the Ramada Plaza Bangkok Menam Riverside's fabulous 285m-long riverside terrace has been renovated and is ready to entertain. Extending an already spectacular dining experience, the terrace has a panoramic view across the enchanting Chao Phraya River. Diners can sit or take a stroll on the beautiful wooden decked floors. The riverfront terrace is ideal for special events such as wedding banquets, networking, corporate parties, and product launches.

Contact: jose@ramadaplazamenamriverside.com

Gyeongnam Convention & Visitors Bureau, South Korea

Gyeongnam has many things to be proud of. Located at a similar latitude to Kyoto in Japan, and Cyprus in the Mediterranean, the destination has a warm climate throughout the year.

There are many renowned tourist attractions such as the Haeinsa Temple, one of three major temples in Korea; the UNESCO World Heritage site Tripitaka Koreana; Geoe Oedo Island, the first marine botanical island which attracts millions of tourists each year thanks to its breathtaking scenery; and Hallyeohaesang National Marine Park which was designated the first national marine park in 1968 and has over 400 islands.

We would like to say Gyeongnam is the perfect place to appreciate picturesque scenery and visit historical sites steeped in culture. We welcome all visitors to this beautiful region!



New sellers dangle new ideas



Sky Resorts Thailand's Supanee Kosolsirisukkul and Bangkok Sky Estate Thailand's Omapatt Nuntapanish and Radklao Apiwattananon



Danang Center for Tourism Promotion's Ngo Minh Quan and Vietnam Airlines Thailand's Adipong Kittiviroj



Mida Hotels & Resorts Thailand's Adhimes Patjarasitdhivong



Novotel Bangkok Bangna's Sakda Chatarsa



Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group Singapore's Nicodemus Lo and Cathy O'Connor



Swissotel Nai Lert Park Bangkok's Supatta Noimuang and Swissotel Le Concorde Bangkok's Nutnaphin Wongapiwattanakul



Norwegian Cruise Line Singapore's William Tay



HRS Group Singapore's Tawitiya Sirisawad, Alicia Lee, Jamie Chua and Marcus Lim



The Imperial Mae Ping Hotel's Duenpen Pongsatra, Thai Hotels Association's La-iad Bungsrithong, Holiday Inn Chiangmai's Suthathip Yapanan, Fah Lanna Spa Thailand's Nareenart Jitrong and Maesa Elephant Camp Thailand's Peechaya Kulmapijit



Maritim Hotels China's Huilian Duan and Maritim Hotel Shenyang's Lucy Guo



Swissotel Resort Phuket's Woraphat Srimasongserm and Swissotel Resort Phuket Patong Beach's Peechaya Findlay



Carlson Wagonlit Travel Singapore's Alvan Aiau and Airbnb Singapore's Kevin Hoong



JW Marriott Phuket's Papat Prajyabhorn and Minelli De Kretser, and Phuket Marriott Resort & Spa, Merlin Beach's Wiphamas Khunwong



Above: Worldwide Cruise Associates US' Diana and Steve Bloss

Left: Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit's Khemporn Khajornyuthakrai



Sukosol Hotels Thailand's Pawich Chokkanlayanee



Plaza Premium Group Hong Kong's Karen Cheung, Plaza Premium Lounge Singapore's Stephanie Choong, Travel Warehouse Philippines' Cecille De Guzman and Senayan Trikarya Sempana Indonesia's Leony Kusnadi

Let's shake hands over a win-w



Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok's Siripar Srichiraratana and Hyatt Regency Hua Hin's Arisara Kitarattanajirayos



Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government's Ya Lien Yuan, The Howard Plaza Hotel Taipei's Nicole Lu, Regent Taipei's Sophia Guo, Taiwan Convention Exhibition Association's (TCEA) Gina Ho, Apple Travel Service Taiwan's Emily Chiu, Luxury Tours & Travel Singapore's Michael Lee, Apple Travel Service Taiwan's Matthew Wu, TCEA's Paul Wang and Grand Hyatt Taipei's Jake Wang



Laguna Phuket's Nantanee Chuaychu and Travel Leaders Australia's Andrew Anthony



COEX South Korea's Yoon Joo Lee



Meet Taiwan's Kyleen Hsieh



Seoul Convention Bureau's Han Jaewon and Yunah Lee



Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's (TCEB) Supanich Thiansing, Piyawan Yamarat and Nooch Homrossukhon, TCEB Singapore's Gladly Chua and TCEB China's Shane Xin

in deal at IT&CMA 2016!

By Eugene Tang



Grand Hyatt Taipei's Jake Wang



Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines' Susana Del Mundo



Centara Hotels & Resorts Thailand's Popo Hartopo and Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya's Rattanapol Jirawattana



Event Network Entertainment India's Vikrant Grover, and One World Hotel Malaysia's Shona Pang and Rachel Lim



TTG Asia Media's Kwek Wan Ling, Ingrid Chung, Ar-lene Lee, Michael Chow, Darren Ng, Pierre Quek, Shirley Tan and Hidy Lee show off TTG Asia's 50th Anniversary Special Edition



Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau's Akiko Nakagami and Tsuyoshi Kikune



Virgvirgin Thailand's Yupha Moonsam, Riviera Marriott Hotel La Porte de Monaco AC Hotel Nice's Laurent Palmieri, Monaco Government Tourist Bureau Asia Office Singapore's Benoit Badufle and Yew Zhi Heng, and Virgvirgin Thailand's Tunya Sri-Inmonth



Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom's Boontrika Charoensuk



Pattaya City's Onvara Karapin



Royal Caribbean International US' Crystal Campbell and Clem Galindo



Celebrity Cruises US' Lisa Vogt



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TCEB - the right strategic partner to achieve business success

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) is a government organisation that propels and develops the business events industry covering meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions in Thailand. With our extensive experience, efficiency, professionalism and strong business networks, we are an unrivalled strategic business partner. Our dynamic team will help organise your business event seamlessly, leading to ultimate success.

THAILAND - the gateway to global success

As Asia's capital of connection, Thailand is an ideal international and strategic business location where opportunities abound. The country offers outstanding destinations, excellent infrastructure and facilities to host business events. Thailand's friendly hospitality, service excellence and extensive global connections are the perfect combination to make all business events shine. It is the best place to ensure your event enjoys global success.

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CONNECT with the essence of Thailand at Pavilion No. B1 and CONNECT with TCEB at Pop Up Thailand in Hosted Buyer Lounge.