



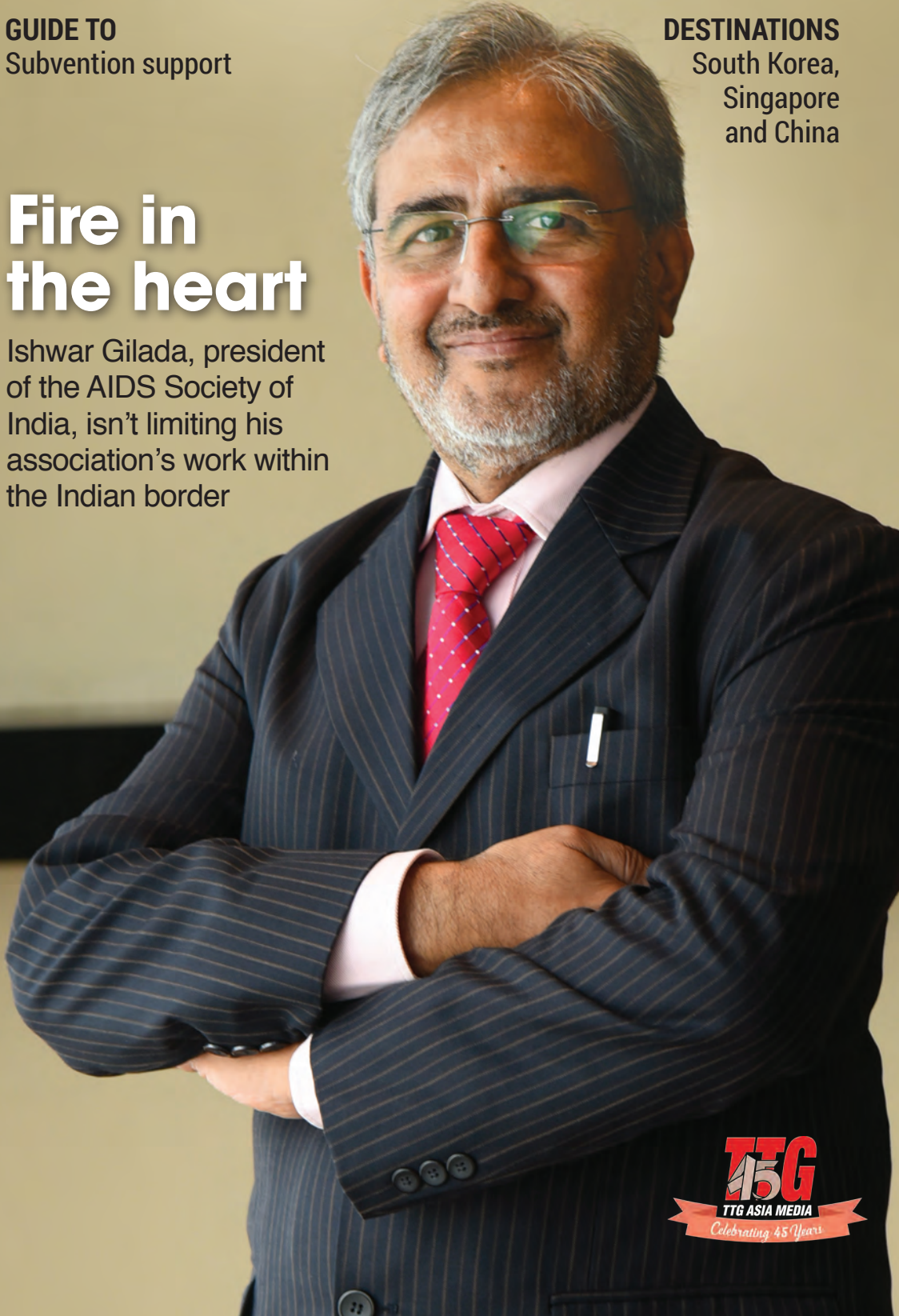
GUIDE TO
Subvention support



DESTINATIONS
South Korea,
Singapore
and China

Fire in the heart

Ishwar Gilada, president
of the AIDS Society of
India, isn't limiting his
association's work within
the Indian border



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What's your story?

This issue of *TTGassociations* highlights an aspect of association work that has long been achieved but is only gaining attention in recent years.

And that is the legacy left behind for members and the wider community.

In speaking with association executives, I realised two things – professional associations perform more than just self-serving roles for their members and the industry they represent, and not enough bragging about their achievements is done.

But, wait. Why is it important to brag about the legacies that associations establish? Many authors would have written at length about this, but here are my quick views. First, it emphasises the important, relevant work that associations do, which in turn demonstrates that membership is useful and necessary in this fickle world where information and network can be obtained and built respectively online.

Secondly, it underscores the fact that association executives are professionals in their own right, and a successful association requires talents who can manage and bring it forward.

Thirdly, it reminds governments that association meetings must be supported for the good it brings to the local

economy and community, and that such gatherings are more than mere contributors to tourism receipts.

These points bring me back to the need to brag, and brag strategically as associations must.

Associations should first consider the work they do and take a broad look at how their activities could impact various stakeholders, not just their members. If such achievements aren't clearly defined, then make an effort to build legacies into their programmes and events.

Next, convey these achievements to the news media – both mass media (such as the national papers and global news networks) and specialised media (such as trade publications) through custom angles that appeal to their audience.

Associations should also consider social media channels, especially if there is a human interest angle with attractive photo opportunities in their activities, as well as participating in relevant awards that acknowledge positive association work, such as ASAE's Power of A Awards.

Meanwhile, I hope this issue's Talking Point features and Profile interview will further emphasise the importance of association work, and the need for these achievements to be told.



Karen Yue
Group Editor

PROFILE

10

Fire in the heart

Ishwar Gilada, president of the AIDS Society of India, isn't limiting his association's work within the Indian border. He tells [Karen Yue](#) what has been done and what more will come



GUIDE TO

13

Supportive subvention

Both financial and non-financial support from potential host cities can make a big difference to the success and quality of an association meeting. TTGassociations reporters round up the range of assistance major Asian meetings destinations are offering this year



DESTINATIONS



19

South Korea // Busan sets clear direction

A focus on attracting meetings related to Busan's strategic industries and extensive city redevelopments are boosting the port city's appeal, writes [Karen Yue](#)



21

Singapore // A wave of opportunities

Major redevelopment plans on Sentosa Island will help to lower venue costs, making the destination more appealing to associations, reports [Pamela Chow](#)



23

China // Favourable winds blow
Shanghai and Beijing are going strong with global association meetings, aided by new hardware and improved international air access, but their sister cities are taking strategic moves to also win on the associations front. By [Caroline Boey](#)

DEPARTMENTS

1 To our readers

3 News

8 On the shelves

2 Contents

5 Talking point

17 Case studies



ICCA mulls unique conference just for Asia-Pacific

By Rosa Ocampo

ICCA's Asia Pacific Chapter is looking to launch a conference this year to address the region's unique needs on education, networking and business development.

The ICCA Apac Summit 2019 concept paper, unveiled at the 57th ICCA Congress last November, specified that the event

“does not intend to dilute or replace official ICCA events but instead aim to complement ICCA's presence in the region while leveraging on this platform that ICCA has built”.

ICCA board member and Apac Chapter member Jason Yeh said: “We have talked about organising the Summit for a long time. The region is so big and we cover very huge territories. It is very hard to form a common interest”.

Yeh added that the Asia Pacific Chapter is growing, hence the desire to “tie up with all the communities in the region”. The Asia Pacific Chapter is the largest of all chapters outside Europe, with 265 members.

While the annual ICCA Congress had been held in Asian cities in recent years – Shanghai (China) in 2013 and Kuching (Malaysia) in 2016 – with the 2020 edition heading to Taiwan, there has not been an ICCA event that is organised by the members in the region, for the members in the region.

“Although ICCA events like the Congress and Association Meetings Programme (AMP) do rotate to the region, and we have our own Client Supplier Business Workshop, the time is right for this regional community to recognise the untapped opportunities within ourselves, and harness it,” the concept paper said.

To help defray the cost of organising and hosting Summit 2019, the Chapter intends to charge a minimal registration fee for members, rely on sponsorship package, and to approach ICCA headquarters to host the airfare of five association executives from the region.

The draft programme for the event includes, among others, ICCA Business Leads Exchange, Data Lab on how to use ICCA data for business and communications, plenary sessions and networking receptions.

Hyderabad wins blood congress

Associations management company CIMGlobal and Peritoneal Dialysis Society of India have secured the hosting rights to the 37th Annual Meeting of the International Society of Blood Purification (ISBP) for Hyderabad, India. Set to take place from August 21-24, 2019, the event will attract up to 1,000 delegates from various countries.

The ISBP congress is expected to be of “exceptional importance for India”, said a statement issued by CIMGlobal, as it will showcase the latest international achievements and the most up-to-date methods used in Blood Purification field.

The congress was hosted in Skopje, Macedonia this year and in Guangzhou, China in 2017. Other Asian cities that have hosted the congress include Hiroshima (2016), Yokohama (2012), Beijing (2011) and Nara (2006).



IACC cooks up delegate dietary requirements guide for planners

A recent study by the IACC, a global network of meeting suppliers and planners, has discovered a significant increase in conference delegates expressing dietary and allergen requirements during event registration.

The 2018 *Meeting Room of the Future* report expects this trend to grow in 2019.

As such, IACC, in collaboration with the World Obesity Foundation and industry partners such as MPI, Events Industry Council and Thrive Meetings and Events, has created the *Guide to Managing Conference Delegate Dietary Requirements*.

The comprehensive guide is designed to help planners manage partnerships and liaise with venues on the topic of dietary needs and requirements to ensure delegate health and well-being.

It also explains the various allergens and emerging diets, including religious requirements and health-related allergens, and provides advice and practical tips on how to place delegate health and well-being at the heart of events without compromising on experience.

IACC also pointed to another study, *Trends in Nutrition & Delegate Wellbeing*, which highlighted that 79 per cent of meeting planners agreed that they now receive more dietary requests in comparison to two years ago; only 75 per cent



Meeting planners from the around the globe are noticing a significant increase in dietary and allergen requests from their delegates

of venues offer staff training on serving people with allergies; and only 33 per cent of venues include basic nutritional information on their menus.

Mark Cooper, IACC's CEO, commented: “As we conducted more research, we saw clearly that there was some valuable insights and best practice that if adopted, would help both our planner and venue community. This is just the beginning and we hope that in the near future we will see more training and certifications to support the competent management of dietary needs.”

The full guide can be downloaded from www.iacconline.org.

Philippine agriculturists plan first regional convention

By Rosa Ocampo

The Philippine Association of Agriculturists (PAA) is working towards an annual regional convention beginning July 2019, the first step towards expanding its reach amid the ASEAN economic integration.

It is scouting for an event management company to handle the initial convention, which will feature commercial and technology components, to be held in Manila for up to 5,000 delegates, PAA president Arthur R Baria said.

Reaching out to Asia holds more meaning even as the Philippines is drafting the qualifying framework to align the competence and skills of its agriculturists to those in South-east Asia, said Baria, who is also Nestle Philippines' assistant vice president and head of agribusiness development department.

Except for PAA, there is no profes-

sional agriculturists association in Asia but Baria sees opportunities for developing the regional network, exchange of technology, and employment opportunities, among other things.

Baria told *TTGassociations* that while agriculture has high contributions to the Philippine economy, the sector is being left behind hence PAA's goal to professionalise the industry, make agriculturists relevant on the frontline while promoting agriculture to students and the youth.

Set on its goal, PAA firmed up the accreditation of seven integrated organisations and 17 regional chapters all over the Philippines in 2018. Its sixth agriculturists convention held last year turned out to be the biggest, with 2,800 delegates.

The association has 4,000 members out of the 20,000 licensed agriculturists in the country and many more that are not licensed.

Being an agriculturist is an exportable skills, with demand from the US, Australia, dairy industry in New Zealand, Japan which has an ageing population, the Middle East, Africa and even for urban agriculture, said Baria.

He hopes that after the ASEAN convention, PAA can also tap the international community within three to four years through Filipino agriculturists scattered around the world.



PAA conventions to go regional

Kaohsiung begins ICCA Congress 2020 attendance building exercise

Taiwan's Kaohsiung, host city for ICCA Congress 2020, is forming alliances with its Asian neighbours to develop twin destination tours and attract association executives.

Hong Kong has agreed to create pre-and post-tours combining Hong Kong and Taiwan, revealed Jason Yeh, ICCA board member and CEO of Taiwan's GIS Group.

Yokohama in Japan has agreed to bring in more Japanese association executives, while the Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives and other ICCA colleagues outside Taiwan are also open to help, Yeh added.

And in preparation for the high profile event which will bring the world's leaders in the meetings business to the port city, Yeh said Kaohsiung is also liaising with other Taiwanese cities including Taipei, Taichung and Tainan to engage as

volunteers and make their facilities easier and friendlier to foreigners.

Kaohsiung won the bid to host ICCA Congress 2020 in part due to its compelling story of re-inventing itself through the power of meetings and designing creative concepts that will help ICCA engage more effectively with associations based in Asia-Pacific. – **Rosa Ocampo**



{ Bureau brief }

More ambassadors for Sydney

Nine influential Australians have joined Business Events Sydney (BESydney) as global ambassadors. The latest entrants include Australia NZ Chamber of Commerce in Japan (Tokyo)'s Melanie Brock, and Bureau of Health Information's Carol Pollock.

The BESydney Global Ambassador Program Patron now features 100 ambassadors across the New South Wales economy. According to BESydney, the programme has "helped secure over A\$320 million (US\$230 million) worth of global events that will be coming to Sydney from now up until 2026".



Spotlight on Old Town Central

Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) has launched the Old Town Central (OTC) MICE Guide in an effort to direct business event planners' attention to venues and activities in the century-old district.

The Guide, which contains recommendations by top planners from four strategic markets across the region, offers four product and information categories: teambuilding ideas, dining venues, event venues, and the 'Choose your own adventure' themed suggestions to get planners started. It is available in print and digital versions, with the latter accessible at www.mehongkong.com/otc.

Hiroshima spotlights unique venues

Hiroshima in Japan has launched a new campaign to bring awareness to a set of new unique event venues, determined to convince planners to be a little more adventurous in their choice of a host city.

The new venues include the mountainside Irori Sanzoku restaurant and gardens, the Hiroshima Museum of Art, the new Hiroshima Orizuru Tower and the impressive Daisho-in Temple. The city's convention bureau is also reaching out to potential planners by attending major tradeshow to enhance its web presence, and collaborating with the Japan National Tourism Organization.

Penang steps up longhaul marketing

Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) is leveraging increased services by Qatar Airways from Doha to intensify its efforts in attracting more association meetings from the UK and US.

Qatar Airways started its thrice-weekly services in February 2018, prompting strong hopes of business boost by local event players. The airline went on to raise frequencies to four-times-weekly on July 1. PCEB efforts include having a bigger presence at The Meetings Show in the UK.

Loud and serious about legacies

Bragging is frowned upon but association chiefs are realising that there's a critical need to shout about the extensive public good their organisations are doing to clearly convey the legacies left behind by their work, writes **Karen Yue**

Professional associations perform more than self-serving roles for their members and the industry they represent. Fact. Professional associations, through their meetings and events, leave behind more than just tourism receipts for the host city. Fact.

Unfortunately, also a fact, a lot of the good that associations do are kept within their walls.

Illustrating the extensiveness of associations' work, John Graham, president and CEO of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), said: "Everything in life is touched by associations. Associations set the safety standards of the smartphone you are using, the production standards of the blouse that you wearing, and the quality of the medical care you are receiving. And that's just the standard-setting part of the work associations do."

"Associations also boost the economy, create jobs and conduct research to improve lives. But not many people know about the public good that associations are achieving, and it is important that associations talk about that."

For years, the ASAE has run the annual Power of A Awards in North America, which recognises associations that are able to leverage their unique resources to solve problems, advance industry/professional performance, kickstart innovation and improve world conditions.

Award winners have traditionally been North American associations, but ASAE is now hoping to globalise it by including nominees and winners from Asia-Pacific.

"The concept of the Power of A is relevant in any part of the world, and so we thought why not try to get some associations based in Asia-Pacific to apply for the awards in 2019 and into the future? Furthermore, the awards is one way to bring wider attention to the legacies of associations," he added.

Here in Asia, the Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives (PCAAE) organises the Ang Susi Awards which recognises individuals who have sustainably managed an association and produced remarkable results, and also membership organisations that have demonstrated outstanding achievements in helping the environment, empowering people, serving communities, enhancing

trade and industry, developing technology solutions, and for being agents of change.

Graham believes that associations need to "get smarter" in publicising their good work, something that Richard Holmes, director of the International Bureau For Epilepsy (IBE), echoes.

"It could be talking to the press or using social media to spread the word on what the association is doing in the lead up to, during and after its meeting," Holmes said.

Association leaders who spoke to *TTGassociations* also emphasised the importance of measuring and communicating the legacies of associations to

the government and relevant agencies, so that their meetings aren't only recognised for their contribution to tourism. This in turn would encourage more local government and national agencies to support hosting bids for global association meetings.

Another critical aspect of association

legacies, opined association leaders, is the need to carefully build opportunities to do good into their programme.

Iain Bitran, executive director of the International Society For Professional Innovation Management (ISPIM), said: "Legacies don't just fall from the sky or materialise with the wave of a wand. Associations must plan for it to happen."

On ISPIM's part, the association has moved to "build legacy into our Asia-Pacific meetings" by having challenge-based content. In preparation for the ISPIM Connects Fukuoka conference in Japan in December 2018, Bitran met with the city government and had them identify seven to 10 local issues that could be addressed with innovation.

"From that we picked three: ageing, energy transition and building a start-up ecosystem," Bitran explained.

"Our members worked on possible solutions in the lead up to our conference, and presented them to the city and local participants at the meeting. Our solutions became the legacies we left behind for Fukuoka."



Graham: amplify the good

Far-reaching goodness of associations

From improving safety and living conditions of people to conserving wildlife, associations can effect deep social benefits through their meetings and the work they do.

AIDS Society of India

The AIDS Society of India lobbied successfully for the establishment of an AIDS/HIV law in 2017 that protected patients from abuse, as well as government support and recognition for the need for AIDS/HIV public education which has helped to reduce the number of infections. Its intensive promotion of far more affordable AIDS/HIV medication produced by qualified Indian pharmaceutical companies and their export to Africa have allowed more patients in that continent to access medicine.

Life Saving Society Malaysia

When the World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2015 was held in Penang, Malaysia, the local host, Life Saving Society Malaysia, took the opportunity to call for the creation of a council to promote water safety culture, and to lobby for swimming lessons in school. A year after the conference, the Malaysian cabinet approved the formation of the Water Activity Safety Council, which was placed under a ministry. The conference itself also brought about nation-wide awareness of the vast number of drowning cases and prevention methods.



Orphaned orangutans benefited from ICCA Congress

International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)

ICCA, through its annual ICCA Congress, runs the Gift of Love project which allows delegates to contribute to charitable causes in the host city. As well, in the lead up to ICCA Congress 2016 in Kuching, Sarawak, ICCA ran a year-long Borneo Orangutan Project which invited delegates to adopt one of six orphaned baby orangutans. It drew excellent response, where companies – not just individuals – offered large sums of money to support the programme.



From left: (L to R) Forever Living's Rex Maughan, and MBS' Ailynn Seah and Kevin Teng at the charity packing activity; food packing activity at the 2016 Flight Centre Global Gathering – it was the largest CSR event that Flight Centre has ever conducted as part of their annual event

The power of M

Meetings can take on Meaning and when harnessed properly, unleash Power in the communities touched by the organiser, writes **Ailynn Seah**

The MICE industry has traditionally been measured mainly on the basis of its contributions to the tourism sector, and evaluated almost exclusively in measurable economic benefits.

But there are so many other powerful and meaningful benefits that go beyond dollars and cents to transcend into social impact and even legacies.

One way is through CSR activation. Increasingly, we find event organisers turning to us to incorporate CSR activities into their programmes in order to deepen engagement with their delegates.

They also look towards us for advice as sustainability is deeply ingrained in our operations.

The Forever Living Global Rally in 2015, and Flight Centre Global Gathering in 2016, were two of the largest events held at Marina Bay Sands where large-scale CSR initiatives were incorporated as part of their programmes for the first time.

US-based multi-level marketing company Forever Living held a five-hour charity packing activity where volunteers, including 70 Marina Bay Sands employees and Forever Living executive staff, packed over 285,000 meals for the underprivileged. Aside from leading this initiative by connecting the organisers with charity partner Rise Against Hunger (previously known as Stop Hunger

"It is always heartening to work with like-minded clients that share the same vision of creating a positive impact to the communities and the environment."

Now), my colleagues and I also participated as volunteers.

A similar experience was introduced with Australian travel company Flight Centre – we teamed up with the organisers, Rise Against Hunger and the Singapore Tourism Board to organise a food-packing activity with 250 travel agents and 25 Marina Bay Sands staff volunteers. Over 30,000 nutritious meals were packed within a span of 30 minutes, which was later distributed by Food Bank Singapore to the elderly and those with low incomes.

Kerry-Anne Walker, team lead of Flight Centre Global Gathering, had this to say: "Thanks for making the CSR segment a reality and such a success... we have had brilliant feedback and it now looks like it will be a permanent fixture on the agenda for Flight Centre Global Gathering moving forward."

Food, too, has always been a great conversation starter and forms an essential part of the delegate experience.

It can also serve as a medium for event organisers to tell stories that align with their corporate values, especially in the area of sustainability.

We recently hosted two reputable green events – the Schneider Electric Innovation Summit; as well as the 7th Responsible Business Forum on Sustainable Development, organised by Global Initiatives in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme. For both events, we worked together with our clients to raise the bar for their corporate sustainability goals by creating 'Earth-friendly' menus using with organically certified, responsibly produced or locally sourced ingredients.

It is always heartening to work with like-minded clients that share the same vision of creating a positive impact to the communities and the environment.

For me, this creates Meaning and puts Meaningfulness back into Meetings. That's the Power of M!



Ailynn Seah is the vice president of sales – MIC and association at Marina Bay Sands. She has over 20 years of experience in hospitality sales

and marketing, and leads the sales team in securing and executing major international meetings and conferences for Marina Bay Sands. Seah is also certified under the Certified Meeting Professional and Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate programmes.

You too, can make a difference

More association and business events are setting good CSR examples by weaving in various opportunities for their delegates to do good, observes **Jane Vong Holmes**

Increasingly, businesses and associations are incorporating a corporate social responsibility (CSR) element in their meetings and events programme.

One of my favourite examples is set by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), which has, for years, substituted speakers' gifts at its annual congress and General Assembly with a financial donation to a charitable organisation selected by the Local Host Committee.

At its last two congresses in Prague and Dubai, a fun Run N Walk was also organised for delegates who wanted to explore the city in a quick and fun way while taking the opportunity to offer a small financial donation to a local NGO. It was a great way to connect with other like-minded ICCA delegates and to start the day on an energetic note.

It is amazing how fast friendships can form this way.

Simultaneously, a grassroots project, ICCA Members Gift of Love (ICCA Members GOL), encourages delegates to bring a small gift with them to the congress. Since 2013, ICCA delegates have contributed wheelchairs, books, puzzles, children's shoes, toys and spectacle frames to various NGOs around the world.

Past ICCA Members GOL partners include the Local Host Committees and their selected charities – the Shanghai International Communication Center for The Disabled, China (2013); Losev Foundation for Children with Leukemia, Turkey (2014); Haciendo Camino, Argentina (2015); Malaysian Librarians Association Sarawak Chapter, Malaysia (2016); SOS Children's Village, Czech Republic (2017); and Noor Dubai Foundation, the UAE (2018).

While everyone enjoys receiving gifts, even more enjoy giving. I have seen how enthusiastically and carefully my fellow ICCA delegates have selected their gifts. Co-workers, mothers and neighbours have been recruited to expand the gift collection network as much as last-minute purchases at airports; with some even lovingly packed with a gift card and the warmest wishes.

Recently I participated in MICECON 2018, organised by the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) in the city of Bacolod. Participants at this biennial national conference on busi-



From left: ICCA Congress 2018 delegates ran for charity; MICECON 2018 called on delegates to bring a suitable gift for needy children

"We do not need to try to save the whole world. If our conscious actions as an events organiser or a delegate can make a difference to just one individual, this is as good a start as any."

Jane Vong Holmes

Senior Manager Asia, GainingEdge

ness events – the sixth edition in 2018 – were encouraged to bring with them a small essential item in their suitcase. It could be a towel, blanket, children's book or notebook with pen. These items were for the Holy Infant Nursery Foundation, Inc. and the Bacolod Girls' Home Foundation, Inc.

In addition, TPB worked with city officials – mayor Evelio "Bing" Leonardia and his team – and two food manufacturers which produce Bacolod's famous delicacy, *piaya* (an unleavened flatbread). Tapping into the Philippines' *pasalubong* culture or the practice of bringing home a food gift, the two food manufacturers Merczi and BongBong's offered a percentage of their sales to the above-mentioned charities when any MICECON delegate produces his/her badge during purchase.

This was done not only at the factory outlets which were part of the pre-conference tour, but also at selected outlets around the city.

I was struck by the simple ingenuity of the organiser and its partners, and have no doubt that the two charities enjoyed a small boost in funding with the help of MICECON delegates who brought back their *pasalubong* to their families and work colleagues.

We do not need to try to save the whole world. If our conscious actions as an events organiser or a delegate can make a difference to just one individual, this is as good a start as any.

As part of the business events industry, we are a privileged community. Our work includes travel to exotic locations for learning, networking and business or partnership opportunities, and where the host communities welcome us so warmly and with such great hospitality. Doing good and giving back to the locals are just small ways of saying thank you and paying it forward.

We can make a difference.



Jane Vong Holmes is senior manager – Asia of GainingEdge, a consultancy specialising in the business events industry. She has co-

authored two UNWTO publications on the Asian meetings industry and various destination market studies. She recently released a joint report on universal accessibility in the meetings industry. She is an ardent advocate for giving back to communities through conventions and events.

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New events hardware at Melbourne & Olympic Parks

Rod Laver Arena and Margaret Court Arena at the Melbourne & Olympic Parks (M&OP) precinct are the latest venues to complete redevelopment, joining AAMI Park and Melbourne Arena in offering event planners an enhanced premier experience for businesses and associations.

Rod Laver Arena (Centre Court during the Australian Open), is perfect for hosting intimate gatherings within its brand new open spaces, while Margaret Court Arena welcomes large-scale events such as formal dinners, cocktail-style events, galas and conferences for 200 to 8,500 guests.

In addition to venue spaces, M&OP offers exceptional catering options for events.

M&OP, which is located on the edge of Melbourne's CBD, will soon embark on its



stage-three redevelopment. Looking to 2022, a new state-of-the-art conference centre with the capacity to host 3,000 guests will join M&OP's list of arenas, stadiums and venues.

HK Express takes off for Nagasaki

Hong Kong-based low-cost carrier HK Express has commenced thrice-weekly flights between Hong Kong and Nagasaki on January 19, 2019. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, flight UO830 departs Hong Kong at 13.05 for arrival in Nagasaki at 17.05. Flight UO831 leaves Nagasaki at 19.50 to arrive back in Hong Kong at 22.05.

{ What's on offer }

Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore

The 268-key Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore in Singapore's CBD offers an Executive Boardroom and an outdoor pool terrace for functions, events and meetings.

The Executive Boardroom can cater up to 12 people comfortably. Boasting floor-to-ceiling windows that open out to the city skyline, the space is decked out with the latest technology, and is supported by a dedicated on-site team.

Full-day meeting packages start from S\$65 (US\$47) per person, which includes two coffee breaks. At S\$85 per person, the package will include one lunch and two coffee breaks. Lastly, at S\$105 per person, the package includes one lunch, two coffee breaks, and one-hour-long free-flow alcohol.

Meanwhile, half-day meeting packages start from S\$25 per person just for boardroom rental. If one coffee break is included, it'll cost S\$40 per person. A lunch and coffee break would come up to S\$70 per person.



Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore

All boardroom packages require a minimum booking of four persons.

For larger groups, book an outdoor barbecue package at the pool terrace with two-hour-long unlimited house beers and wines, plus on-site chef service from S\$80 per person. With a minimum spend of S\$2,500, exclusive usage of The Oakwood Executive Club will also be thrown in.

This package is applicable for a minimum of 20 persons and maximum of 60 persons for a rental period of three hours from 18.00 daily.

All prices are subject to seven per cent GST and 10 per cent service charge.

Email dining.opsg@oakwood.com.

Hotel Nikko Bangkok

The recently-opened Nikko Bangkok is offering special rates of 5,200++ baht (US\$157) for a superior room. The offer is valid for stays from now until June 30, 2019 and is inclusive of breakfast for two.

Located at 27 Sukhumvit Soi 55, within walking distance of the BTS Skytrain Thonglor station, Hotel Nikko Bangkok features 301 guestrooms and suites, including 10 extended stay rooms complete with kitchenette.

There are four restaurants and lounges, while meetings and events spaces include the Fuji Grand Ballroom, one of the largest in the Thonglor neighbourhood with a capacity for 1,250 pax in cocktail-style.

Email mokul-sales@mohg.com.



From left: The Centre's IT Team with Certificates of Appreciation from the White House Communications Agency's Presidential Communications Officer, Ryan Kenner for their outstanding support during the visit of Barack Obama, former President of United States during the 27th ASEAN Summit; John Burke

THE MARRIAGE OF TECHNOLOGY AND DATA IS KEY TO SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

*As the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) continues to elevate its technical capabilities, **John Burke**, the centre's deputy general manager shares about how 'hardware' is only part of the story*

■ THE PEOPLE

Our business is all about delivering great experiences. Our success depends on ensuring that our event organisers and their guests have a seamless technical experience. Yes, we do need to fulfil certain technical capabilities, and as such invest over RM2 million (US\$0.49 million) per year in upgrading our hardware to stay ahead of the technological curve, but more importantly is the investment in our technical team.

We put an emphasis on recruiting, training and retaining a technical team that deeply understands both the technology and the events industry. Flexibility is part of our team's mindset. We actively look for solutions in delivering our services to our clients, even if the client's technical requirements are unusual or do not align with the venue's own policies.

Our priority is the customer experience and making our client's event as successful as possible. We don't believe in technology for technology's sake. It is important to have the infrastructure in place,

but it is equally, if not more, important, to have a technical team who really gets what success looks like for a particular event and then tailor the solutions to fit.

■ THE DATA

We have been putting a lot of work into improving security at the centre. We have beefed up CCTV coverage of the venue through the deployment of additional cameras. We have also invested in a smart management platform that provides all kinds of additional data that we intend to turn into actionable information, which we can then use to help our clients to enhance their events.

For example, we can now track the flow of people (as a mass) throughout the centre and we can use this data to identify ways in which to improve the efficiency of the building and our clients' events.

The marriage of technology and data will be increasingly important to successful events in the future. There is a huge amount of potential to further enhance the customer's journey by



The Centre's AV Manager, Norbiha Ismail, the only woman in Malaysia to have obtained the Professional Certification for Rigging Entertainment, oversees her team prepping the Plenary Hall for an entertainment event.

taking advantage of the new technological capabilities on offer.

■ CONNECTIVITY

For business events clients today, Wi-Fi capability is one of their top concerns. We are particularly proud of our connectivity thanks to our ongoing investments in our technological backbone and continuous upgrades.

As a result of these investments we have the bandwidth to offer a great Wi-Fi experience to all users and visitors in the centre, with consistently fast coverage in all parts of our (very large) building. We have a team of people

who monitor our technology infrastructure and ensure that it is up to date. This proactive approach to managing our system means that we can stay ahead of the ever-increasing demand for bandwidth and ensure consistency in delivery. It is fair to say that the centre is one of the most technologically advanced venues in Malaysia.



**KUALA LUMPUR
CONVENTION CENTRE**

Ishwar Gilada

Fire in the heart

Ishwar Gilada, president of the AIDS Society of India, isn't limiting his association's work within the Indian border. He tells **Karen Yue** what has been done and what more will come

Tell me more about the work of the AIDS Society of India (ASI).

ASI is a national association of medical doctors and researchers who are engaged in HIV care and support. We have more than 650 members, 10 per cent of whom are researchers. We organise the annual National Conference of AIDS Society of India that is attended by 500 to 600 people – our members, as well as stakeholders such as government agents and representatives from pharmaceutical companies and donor agencies.

We also invest in continuing education. HIV is a vibrant field – many new treatments and medicine are coming up. We need to keep our members abreast of what's happening globally.

The most important aspect of our work is advocacy. A lot of the available HIV medicines are too pricey for most patients from Asia and Africa, and some parts of Europe even.

Along with Indian pharmaceutical companies, we lobbied to (legally) violate patents. Our role as clinicians is for patients, not for patents. Indian generic pharmaceutical companies have been wonderful in this regard, as they have fought legal battles (to violate patents) that have been supported by the World Intellectual Property Organization, which also agrees that patients' rights are more important than patents.

(Without patent restrictions) a three-in-one HIV combo medicine that costs US\$10,492 per patient per year internationally is priced at only US\$69 in India. Now, 92 per cent of the world's HIV patients are taking India-made medicine. If India – and ASI – fought none of this battle, Africa's HIV-positive community would have been finished.

How can patent violation be legal?

It is done through legal recourse in two ways: Compulsory License and Voluntary License.

Compulsory License is issued by governments under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Doha 2001 declaration when the innovator company

is unable/unwilling to offer life-saving medicines at affordable costs. In this case, the copy maker pays five per cent of the trade cost to the innovator.

Voluntary License is issued by the innovator company to one or more generic manufacturer, free of charge, to prevent litigations, compulsory licensing, etc to protect their own markets in the innovator and patent-respecting countries.

Indian pharmaceutical companies have been able to make excellent copies of HIV medicine (using either Compulsory License or Voluntary License) that are sold in India, Asia or Africa.

The same is happening with medicine for Hepatitis C, a viral infection that is commonly spread among drug users. Medicine costs around US\$1,000 per tablet, and patients need to take it across 84 days. That's US\$84,000 for a course of treatment. But innovator company Gilead issued Voluntary License to 11 Indian pharmaceutical companies to manufacture and sell these anti-HCV (Hepatitis C) medicines at just US\$1,000, greatly expanding the medicine's accessibility to patients. Isn't it a great achievement?

ASI may be a small organisation, but we make huge changes in the world.

Now that ASI has succeeded in bringing down the cost of HIV medication, what's next on your agenda for advocacy?

HIV patients face a three-way cost: medication, investigation and medical care. Investigation kits are made abroad. We are now asking Indian pharmaceutical companies to also produce test kits and machines, so that investigation costs will go down. Plus, being able to conduct tests in India cuts down on investigation time.

We are pushing for greater HIV care acumen, so that patients can also be treated by high quality caregivers.

Another important task is to make vaccines more affordable. There are some (HIV-related) infections and diseases that are vaccine-preventable, such as Hepatitis B. One Hepatitis B vaccine costs less



that US\$1 in India. In other countries, it can cost as much as US\$100. By getting the production license of these vaccines as well, for production in India, we can help make them more affordable to patients in developing countries.

So your society isn't just looking after the wellbeing of HIV/AIDs patients in India.

As medical people, we need to fight for anyone who cannot have easy access to medication and help. But you could say what we do is also for selfish reasons (laughs). If patients survive, we will survive. If everyone's dead from HIV/AIDs, what use is there of us?

What other countries are benefitting from your advocacy work?

Most of Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as South America. North America and Western Europe can well afford the pricier medication.

Considering the work ASI does beyond India, is it affiliated with any global association?

There is an International AIDS Society (IAS). ASI was initially formed as an offshoot of that, with the aim of being affiliated at a later stage. We're still unable to be affiliated, which limits our power.

What's stopping ASI from being affiliated with IAS?

ASI restricts our membership to only doctors and researchers but IAS opens its membership to also social workers, sex workers, HIV-positive people – everybody. There's no right or wrong membership structure. ASI has a more restricted membership because our focus is on education in HIV management and prevention.

To be affiliated with IAS would possibly require us to expand our membership, something we are not yet ready to do. But we are looking at other ways to work with IAS.

(Editor's update: Following the interview in late-September 2018, Gilada was elected to the IAS Governing Council for Asia and the Pacific Islands in October 2018, a seat he will hold for four years.)

You mentioned that ASI alone has limited power. Is your society then working with other organisations to expand its ability to effect changes?

Yes. One example is our work with APACC (Asia Pacific AIDS & Co-infections Conference) which held its third edition in Hong Kong (June 2018). Wherever opportunities for collaboration emerges in Asia, we are interested. Asia makes up 60 per cent of the world's population, but the region is not significantly united (in terms of HIV work). As such, Asia's role in HIV specialisation isn't sufficient-

ly regarded. We need to do more to make our voices heard on the global stage.

I think Asian HIV specialists can build a more prominent presence in the global space if related associations here could come together to bring more global HIV/AIDs conferences to this region.

I agree, and Asia is more than ready to play host. Having attended so many conferences around the world, I can tell you that Asian destinations make the best host. I've attended international conferences in the West where I paid US\$1,000 in registration fees and was not given even a bottle of water. Attendees had to buy a drink and pay for every single thing. There was no welcome reception, no lunch, no dinner functions. In contrast, at any conference hosted in Asia, attendees can expect three coffee breaks a day at least!

Such hospitality is important because who wants the trouble of stepping away from the sessions just to hunt down a cup of coffee or a quick bite?

“NOW, 92 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S HIV PATIENTS ARE TAKING INDIA-MADE MEDICINE. IF INDIA – AND ASI – FOUGHT NONE OF THIS BATTLE, AFRICA'S HIV-POSITIVE COMMUNITY WOULD HAVE BEEN FINISHED.”

Let's talk more about the National Conference of AIDS Society of India. Does it rotate across India?

They are mostly held in the South, such as Bangalore and Hyderabad. Editions held in the North saw weaker attendance. Two-thirds of India's HIV cases are in the South, so naturally there is a larger population of doctors and researchers based there. Pharmaceutical companies also have more intensive marketing in the South. It makes better sense to keep our conferences in the South.

Is attendance growing?

Not much because HIV cases aren't rising in India due to improved access to quality treatment, as well as greater knowledge among the people about the virus and its prevention.

Does ASI conduct public seminars?

Earlier, yes, in a big way. Over the past eight years or so, education campaigns have gone down (in frequency) because



From left: A younger Gilada, wearing a garland of condoms, addressed sex workers in Mumbai's infamous red-light district Kamathipura on the use of protection; Gilada emerging from a mobile clinic ran by the Indian Health Organisation (now known as the Peoples Health Organisation)

the government's focus has shifted to providing treatment.

But ASI has been telling the government that doing so would push HIV rates up again. Education on HIV awareness and prevention must continue, especially among the younger generation.

What are the professional challenges faced by HIV/AIDS specialists, and how is ASI helping to address these?

One of the challenges is fear. First, the fear of being infected in the course of our work. While that fear is natural, it is also wrong. I've been practicing for the last three decades and I'm not infected. With sufficient knowledge of how infection occurs, one can take steps to avoid it – so education plays a part.

Second, the fear of losing patients. There was a time, in the 1990s to 2000, when many of our patients died. Back in those dark days, only two per cent of patients in India could afford medicine. The deep emotional impact of that caused doctors to get burnt out very quickly and slip into depression.

But once ASI was able to push for patent violation and have medicine made

cheaply in India, access to medicine improved vastly, and things got a lot better for patients, doctors and caregivers.

The second major challenge is the sustainability of this profession. If one day HIV is completely controlled, medical experts in this field will have nothing left to do. So, we've been asking the government to move away from vertical (academic) programmes on HIV and related infections and diseases, and instead combine them to create a specialised field in anti-viral that covers Hepatitis A, B and C, or HIV and tuberculosis. HIV and tuberculosis are two separate verticals but commonly occurring together because of reduced immunity. By combining related verticals, future medical specialists will become infectious disease specialists and not just an HIV specialist.

My daughter, for example, has taken this route herself. As an infectious disease specialist, she is able to tackle many different infections not limited to HIV.

How soon will this change be reflected in university courses?

The actual change in academic courses will take a longer time because cur-

riculum is determined by many regulators like the Medical Council of India, the government, state government and college's own academic authorities. This change could take years, or decades even.

That is why ASI's education services are important. We can develop programmes to train HIV specialists and broaden their scope of knowledge now. We give participants certificates and points for completing courses with us.

ASI must have a direct line of communication with the government in order to achieve many of its goals. How is this achieved?

Whenever we have a conference, we include an interactive session with the government. We invite government officials, as well as representatives from international HIV/AIDS organisations, for open discussions. In reciprocation, ASI is called into government-led consultation sessions. Increasingly we are seeing more of our expert members being involved in government processes. We even have a WhatsApp group chat comprising government officials and ASI members!

A personality in India's war against HIV/AIDS

Ishwar Gilada was the first person to raise the alarm against AIDS in India (1985). He started India's first AIDS Clinic (1986) at the government-run JJ Hospital, Mumbai. Today, he is a globally acclaimed HIV expert, credited with bringing India onto the AIDS control map of the world. He is presently the president of the AIDS Society of India, secretary general of the Peoples Health Organisation India, and elected member of the IAS Governing Council for Asia and the Pacific Islands.

He has a sub-specialisation in Skin and STDs.

He has initiated, supervised and evaluated 38 AIDS projects in seven Indian states; worked as a consultant for the American Foundation for AIDS Research, World Vision International, USAID; and evaluated Zambia's National STD/AIDS Control programme.

He has addressed over 3,700 meetings and training programmes in India and high HIV burdened African nations.

His work has earned him 70 awards to-date. Notable awards include The Junior Chamber International, USA's Outstanding Young Person of the World (1995) and the Annemarie Madison International Award (1999) which came along with a recognition for being "the Indian Machine gun against AIDS".



Supportive subvention

Both financial and non-financial support from potential host cities can make a big difference to the success and quality of an association meeting. *TTGassociations* reporters round up the range of assistance major Asian meetings destinations are offering this year

Singapore

The Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB), which sits under the Singapore Tourism Board, offers a number of incentive schemes.

The Business Events in Singapore (BEiS) scheme offers customised support that may include funding support, facilitation in securing venues, introductions with leading government agencies, local associations and business partners, as well as marketing and publicity support. Funding support is also given through the BEiS scheme upon fulfilment of its evaluation criteria and deliverables.

Another scheme is the Singapore MICE Advantage Programme (SMAP), a partnership between the SECB, Changi Airport Group, Singapore Airlines, Grab and JetQuay to provide business events organisers and delegates greater value such as savings on air tickets, enhanced event planning and delegate experiences, financial grants and discounts on advertising spaces in Changi Airport, among other benefits. It is intended to complement the BEiS incentive scheme.

Taiwan

MEET TAIWAN, sanctioned by the Bureau of Foreign Trade, provides the Business Events in Surprising Taiwan (BEST) Rewards programme to incentivise and support overseas business groups coming to Taiwan.

BEST Rewards' Partner Package offers incentives such as premium local prod-

From left: Jiufen Old Street in Taipei, Taiwan; Singapore's central business district



JiufenOldStreet/istock



Prasit Rodphan/istock

ucts, inspection subsidies, and complimentary tour passes. Rewards are scaled according to event size and type, and are stacked for planners and agencies that rebook events in Taiwan.

Groups of 50 pax and more staying for at least two consecutive nights can also benefit from the Taiwan Tourism Bureau's administrative assistance, as well as various benefits like welcome gifts, and a cultural show valued up to NT\$150,000 (US\$4,960).

Groups from target countries under the government's New Southbound Policy that stay more than three consecutive nights can enjoy customised support and more financial rewards.

The various city governments in Taiwan also provide their own subvention programmes for different qualified events.

Thailand

The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) supports association conventions that run at least two full days, have at least 50 international delegates who flew into Thailand for the event, and have a programme with academic content.

Assistance comes from the TCEB Conventions Department, a division dedicated to offering a range of financial and non-financial assistance to qualified associations and convention organisers.

TCEB's latest subvention scheme is the ASEAN MaxiMICE programme, created in partnership with Thai Airways International (TG). Launched in January 2019, the programme is aimed at business events travellers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore.

Perks are offered across three tiers – Silver for 40-99 pax, Gold for 100-149 pax, and Platinum for 150 pax and more. Qualified groups can enjoy a range of benefits, such as dedicated immigration lane, cultural performances, additional baggage allowance, pre-assigned group seating, and BTS Card for skytrain travel.

To qualify, groups must arrive in Thailand on a TG flight, and stay for at least two nights.

South Korea

The Korea MICE Bureau (KMB), under the Korea Tourism Organization, offers a range of support for international conventions held in South Korea.

It dishes out hosting and bidding support, with the extent of subvention dependent on the size of the qualified event.

Hosting support includes an official banquet, coffee break as well as cultural programmes, performances and souvenirs, while bidding support includes



ARTYOORAN/shutterstock

Clockwise from top: SM Town in Seoul, South Korea; Parliament House in Canberra, Australia; St Paul's Cathedral in Macau; 1881 Heritage (Old Marine Police Headquarters) in Hong Kong; Chureito Pagoda and Mt Fuji in Fujiyoshida, Japan; Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, Thailand



Sean Pawone/shutterstock



FileImage/Shutterstock

complimentary site inspections that come with accommodation and airfare sponsorship, as well as liaison assistance.

Large-scale international conventions stand to enjoy premium hosting support, such as having an allocated MICE Concierge Desk and exclusive immigration checkpoint at Incheon International Airport, development of an event app, and more.

To qualify, the convention must be hosted by an international organisation or affiliate with a minimum of 100 foreign attendees, and run for at least three days.

Conventions hosted by an organisation that is not a member of an international body must have a minimum of 150 foreign attendees and a programme lasting at least two days. It must also meet UIA and ICCA conference standards.



Ihor Pasternak/Shutterstock



MesamMay/Shutterstock

Japan

While the Japan Convention Bureau (JCB), a division of Japan National Tourism Organization, does not offer financial support for association meetings, it does provide a variety of other support services for meeting organisers in the planning stages.

Using its extensive domestic and international network, JCB recommends potential destinations across Japan based on the association meeting's needs. It assists local association members with the preparation of bid papers, lobbies key persons and provides promotional resources. As part of its key role is helping to plan inspection tours, it also invites association meeting planners to visit Japan on its special inspection site programmes.

Held in cooperation with Japan's International Convention Cities, these inspection site programmes offer attendees the opportunity to visit Japan's regions, connect with local convention bureaus and visit convention and tourist facilities. JCB acts as a liaison, matching event needs to what each city and venue have to offer.

Participants should represent an international conference of at least 200pax (at least 30 per cent of whom would attend from outside Japan) that has the possibility of bidding to convene in Japan within the next five years.

Each participant's package typically covers a round-trip airfare in economy, as well as accommodation and transportation expenses incurred during the inspection site program.

Budget-strapped associations can also appeal for financial assistance from city-level convention bureaus, such as Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau and Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau, both of which extend various types of support for qualified association gatherings.



Daniel Fung/Shutterstock

Australia

International associations can apply for subvention schemes through a new A\$12 million (US\$8.9 million) Bid Fund Program (BFP) launched by Tourism Australia last year.

The fund prioritises events which are aligned with Tourism Australia's business events strategy and trade sectors of national significance to Australia. These are currently defined as Food and Agribusiness, Advanced Manufacturing, Infrastructure, Resources and Energy, International Health, and Services and Disruptive Technologies.

The BFP can be used to help with actual event costs such as accommodation, venue hire and transport. It will not cover administrative, logistics or marketing cost for bids, marketing collateral, delegate acquisition or travel costs for organisers. Submissions must be for a minimum of A\$100,000 (excluding GST).

Associations must demonstrate that their event will attract at least 500 international visitors and that it will significantly contribute economically to Australia.

There are no deadlines for applications but the BFP can only support bids where a decision will be taken by June 30, 2021. Also, Australia only considers applications when it is in competition with other international destinations.

Funds will only be released after contracts are finalised. It will be provided in instalments and are subject to the delivery of key performance metrics as outlined in BFP contracts.

Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Rewards! programme offered by the Hong Kong Tourism Board's Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) office supports qualified business and association events held in the destination.

This programme has been enhanced over the years through MEHK's partnership with various industry partners such as hotels, airlines and attractions. Perks include complimentary cocktail receptions at partner hotels, shopping and F&B discounts at partner attractions, extra baggage allowance offered by partner airlines, and meet-and-greet service at Hong Kong International Airport.

New rewards are added to the Hong Kong Rewards! programme every March.

On top of these, MEHK boosts assistance with complimentary cultural



Metro Manila's business district in the Philippines

performances that add a distinct Hong Kong flavour to the meeting programme.

Options include a lion dance, acrobatic/kung fu show, a trio of cultural extravaganzas comprising Chinese rainbow calligraphy, Chinese knotting and flour doll making, face-changing performance, Chinese quartet and Chinese drum show. Options available for choice vary according to the meeting size.

Macau

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has consolidated its subvention schemes into a single plan called the Convention & Exhibition Financial Support Programme, which comes with a simplified application process.

The general aim of the programme is to assist with bidding and hosting qualified events in Macau.

For confirmed meetings, IPIM provides a variety of financial support that covers accommodation, F&B and meeting packages, keynote speaker appointments, event promotion, simultaneous interpretation, document translation, and many more.

To qualify, the meeting must have at least 100 participants for general meetings, and at least 200 for international meetings.

Support is also dished out to potential meetings that Macau has been short-listed for, and in such cases assistance comes in the form of site inspection arrangements – round-trip flights, ground

transfers and a maximum of three nights' accommodation for up to four key decision-makers.

For international meetings approved or recognised by ICCA, associations can expect extra benefits such as financial support for the hiring of a local PCO and a designated fast-track immigration channel for arriving event delegates.

Philippines

The Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB), which is the marketing arm of the Department of Tourism, has a range of complimentary subventions for association meetings.

It provides assistance in bidding for international association meetings by matching international account leads with local counterparts; in the planning, preparation and submission of bid proposals; in getting multisectoral support; and in drawing up a total package of benefits and privileges for bid presentations.

It also links local associations with contacts in the government and private sectors and suppliers.

Other valuable support includes coordinating/organising site inspections, technical visits and pre/post-tours, promoting attendance through TPB's network of local and overseas offices, providing airport reception for group arrivals, hosting dinner or meals, and marketing support such as e-marketing, marketing paraphernalia, and delegate bags and kits.

Editor's note: Information above is correct at press time. Some Asian destinations not included in this Guide To feature were unable to get back to TTGassociations in time or were pending 2019 subvention programme details. Contact individual convention bureau for details.



Full on attention

A high level of attentive service is the key to impressing a delegation of experienced travel professionals from Skål International, writes **Prudence Lui**

Event brief

The Skål Asia Area Congress, which has been held every year since 1972, returned to Macau for the third time in June 2018. The event is a gathering of professionals from all sectors of the tourism industry.

Macau last hosted the Skål Asia Area Congress in 1994 and 2007.

The 47th Skål Asia Area Congress adopted the theme, Gastronomy Tourism, highlighting the host city's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

DOC DMC Macau was appointed the PCO and was made responsible for a wide range of tasks including project management, financial control and event promotion.

Challenges

Due to Skål International's rich history, the majority of members fall into the over-55 age group. Members are also seasoned tourism industry professionals who have seen the world and attended countless events themselves.

This presented a challenge, opined Bruno Simões, managing director of DOC DMC Macau.

Simões said: "The average span of tourism industry experience among the members is 20 years. How can you meet the expectations of such seasoned professionals? The answer lies in the programme itself. It has to have quality and originality, and be flawless."

The PCO also received a variety of dietary requests from the attendees.

A third challenge emerged in the transfer requirements between Hong Kong International Airport and Macau, as many delegates had to fly into Hong Kong from faraway lands such as Spain, Mauritius and India.

Lastly, the PCO had to take into consideration a single disabled delegate.

While Macau's tourism infrastructure for the disabled abides by international stand-

ards, Simões said the city is generally "not prepared" in terms of transportation for the mobility-challenged.

"There are no travel agencies in Macau that offer transportation for disabled visitors," he recalled.

Solution

To please and impress the experienced delegation, a butler service approach was taken in the congress programming.

Simões explained that every delegate had

their own butler who took care of their registration and bookings, and who greeted them upon their arrival. The same butler also took care of their dietary needs, and was on call at the hotel throughout the event duration.

Bearing in mind the age of attendees as well as the single disabled delegate, DOC DMC Macau provided medical support at the congress venue.

While Simões declined to provide examples of how the on-site medical support was put into use, he said: "It proved to be very useful in a couple of instances."

To ensure a smooth transfer around Macau, the PCO appointed an extra staff with each vehicle to complement the mandatory tourist guide. However, little else could be done to ease the Hong Kong-Macau transfer until the new bridge between the two cities was completed, said Simões.

As for the disabled delegate, DOC DMC Macau outsourced the transportation requirement to Caritas Macau, a non-profit association that provides such services for locals.

Key takeaways

Simões had a number of takeaways from this project. Firstly, he emphasised the need to utilise an online tool for registrations and payments.

He also acknowledged that some event owners had their own pre-arranged solutions, and the appointed PCO needs to be aware of what they are.

As well, as the PCO, Simões said a strong marketing support must be provided to the client. His team made sure the Skål Asia Area Congress was well connected with both the local media and specialised media to deliver editorial coverage before, during and after the event. As well, his team utilised social media to tell the congress story.

Event
The 47th Skål Asia Area Congress
2018

Organiser
DOC MMC Macau

Venue
Macau Fisherman's Wharf Convention and Exhibition Centre

Date
June 21-24, 2018

Number of participants
170

Challenges
Attendees were tourism and events industry veterans with high expectations of conference delivery; numerous dietary requirements must be fulfilled; complex transfer arrangements for delegates between Hong Kong and Macau; attention must be paid to a single disabled delegate

A good kind of intervention

TAFI turns to technology and social media to help ease event management challenges during its 12th convention in Abu Dhabi, writes **Rohit Kaul**

Event brief

Last year, the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) took its 12th convention to Abu Dhabi's Emirates Palace from September 25-28, adopting the theme, *Innovate-Transform-Disrupt: Redefining the Offline Travel World*.

Discussions during the event highlighted various important issues being faced by small- and medium-sized brick-and-mortar travel agents in India. Eminent international speakers included Association of Southern African Travel Agents' Otto De Vries, Australian Federation of Travel Agents' Jayson Westbury and Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations' Hamzah Rahmat.

Besides the solemn programme, the convention also included fun elements such as sightseeing tours around Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra regions.

The event drew more than 500 Indian and international delegates including senior officials from the Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) Abu Dhabi.

Challenges

According to Praveen Chugh, president of TAFI, the first challenge to emerge for TAFI was the management of delegate registrations, as attendees were coming from different parts of India and beyond. The difficulty was compounded by TAFI's need to share various updates on the business sessions, visa processes and post-tour options with delegates, plus track special requests regarding flight changes or post-tour options.

The second challenge was to ensure that the business sessions started on time and were well attended by the delegates.

Lastly, TAFI was determined to build post-tour options that allowed delegates to experience tourism products that they could in turn promote to their customers.

Solution

To overcome the first challenge, TAFI turned to a customised software that allowed organis-



ers to track registered delegates, identify those who had yet to complete the registration process, send critical event updates to different segments of event participants, and accommodate changes to flight schedule and post-tour options.

Chugh noted that "technology intervention" helped make the delegate registration, and information dissemination process, hassle-free.

For the second challenge, TAFI relied on social media. It formed groups for each of its regional chapters, and used the channels to issue reminders on programme schedule. As well, it brought in world renowned motivational speakers like Vivek Bindra and

Nithya Shanti to share with the audience best practices for a successful personal and professional life.

"The mix of business sessions and motivational speakers helped us draw healthy participation from delegates," said Chugh.

For the post-tour options, TAFI created different itineraries that delegates could choose from. A different itinerary was also built for media representatives.

Key takeaways

TAFI acknowledged that the use of software in event management and social media for delegate communication simplified the process and saved the organising committee a lot of time and effort.

Event

Travel Agents Federation of India
Convention 2018

Organiser

Travel Agents Federation of India

Venue

Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi

Date

September 25-28, 2018

Number of participants
In excess of 500

Challenges

Complex needs in delegate management, from tracking registrations to managing special requests; challenges in ensuring programmes are kept to schedule; need for post-tour options that delegates could eventually sell to their customers





Busan's modern skyline is set to change again with three massive city developments

Busan sets clear direction

A focus on attracting meetings related to Busan's strategic industries and extensive city redevelopments are boosting the port city's appeal, writes **Karen Yue**

Busan, South Korea's second most populous city, hosted more than 11,000 business and association events in 2017 – according to statistics published by Busan Tourism Organization (BTO).

As the city progresses in her events performance, BTO has fine-tuned its meeting planner-facing destination promotions by aligning its efforts with the Busan Metropolitan City Government's designated strategic industries in hopes of leveraging related events to strengthen local economic pillars.

According to Jinhwa Lee, marketing manager, MICE Bureau, a part of BTO, Busan's strategic industries are: port logistics, knowledge service infrastructure (which includes tourism, business events and finance), and future strategic and new growth (which includes IT, biomedical and robotics).

BTO's focused efforts have resulted in Busan securing some 200 small- and large-sized trade events on marine and port logistics, such as the annual World Ocean Forum every October, and the establishment of the annual Busan International Medical Tourism Convention which draws some 40,000 participants each time.

The most recent win is the 2022 International Council on Combustion Engines (CIMAC) congress, announced

in November 2018. This joins a string of other prominent meetings set to take place in Busan over the next few years, such as the the 28th World Congress on Biosensors in 2020 (1,500 attendees from 70 countries), and the 2021 International Astronomical Society General Assembly (3,000 attendees from 90 countries).

The line-up of business and association events will keep Busan busy, and her infrastructure developments are keeping pace to ensure upcoming events are well supported.

Lee noted that more than 1,000 new hotel rooms have come into Busan's inventory over the last one to two years, and planners can choose from convention centres and 29 unique venues.

"Busan's two faces – a vibrant city and relaxing resort destination – attract people," she added.

Three massive city developments across Busan will gift the destination

even more leisure and commercial hardware. Two of them are already underway.

The first is the East Busan Tourism Complex in Busan's Gijang district. Spanning 365 hectares, the project is positioned as Busan's new luxury tourism enclave. Hilton Busan and Ananti Cove are the first in the complex to welcome guests.

Opened in July 2017, the five-star Hilton Busan sits on the water's edge, featuring both leisure and event facilities. Barely a year into its opening, the hotel has drawn strong demand from the leisure crowd as well as corporations and associations hosting meetings.

A hotel spokesperson opined that the hotel's vast open spaces – many of them offering ocean views – are perfect for teambuilding and ice-breaker activities, and the hotel's in-house events team is able to tailor a suitable programme for residential meeting groups.

"Busan became one of the best destinations (for meetings and events in South Korea) in a short time. We have much experience in hosting international events. In 2017, Busan hosted over 11,000 meetings and events,"

Jinhwa Lee

Marketing manager, MICE Bureau
Busan Tourism Organization

{ **Need to know** }

1 A supportive organisation

Busan Tourism Organization offers financial and non-financial support for qualified association congresses held in the port city. Support spans hosting assistance such as sponsorship of economy flights for two association representatives coming into Busan for site inspections, preparation of bid documents and complimentary souvenirs; delegate boosting assistance such as supply of destination promotion materials, cultural and arts performances

and official banquet and performance funding; and administrative assistance such as venue rental fees and printing of conference booklets.

2 Unique venues abound

Korea Tourism Organization's MICE brand, Korea Unique Venue, launched early 2018, recommends three unique venues in Busan for events. They are The Bay 101, a waterfront complex; Busan Cinema Center, home of the annual Busan International Film Festival; and Nurimaru APEC House where world leaders once convened in 2005. Busan Tourism Organization has its

own extensive list of unique venues which can be found at www.bto.or.kr.

3 Within easy reach

As South Korea's second most populous city after capital Seoul, as well as the country's busiest port city, Busan is well connected to the rest of the world through its very own international airport – Gimhae International Airport. As well, the KTX Line that runs through Busan Station carries passengers into the city from all parts of South Korea. For instance, travel from Seoul Station to Busan Station by high-speed rail takes only 2.5 hours.

The adjoining Ananti Cove features a cluster of F&B and retail outlets.

Come 2019, the tourism complex will debut a large-scale shopping mall with premium outlets, while further additions including a golf course and club, and a water park will be in place by end-2020.

Yoon Joong Hwa, a manager with BTO, explained that the East Busan Tourism Complex was planned closed to the convention district, where the Busan Exhibition and Convention Center (BEXCO) and Busan Cinema Centre are, to complement business events.

Another work-in-progress is the North Port Redevelopment Project. Several container ports and logistic companies once located in Busan's North Port have been relocated to the New Busan Port in the west, freeing up space to take in a future waterfront park, passenger port facilities and commercial buildings.

"There are plans to have an integrated resort, complete with casinos, a convention centre and hotels, in the future North Port. This project makes sense because it enjoys a prime location being very close to the old city centre, as well as the Busan KTX station," said Yoon.

Busan's third and final development project lies in the west, an area that has been earmarked to support the city's bid for World Expo 2030.

"The west may also have a convention and exhibition centre to supplement BEXCO in the city centre and Busan Port International Terminal Exhibition & Convention Center (opened 2015) in the new North Port. With this, Busan will offer three major convention and exhibition venues," Yoon said.

Busan's evolving infrastructure is all the more necessary as competition for events heats up among South Korean sister cities. Lee said the competition is a "good signal" that the business and association events sector is growing for South Korea, but opined that guidelines for fair competition are needed.

Meanwhile, BTO will continue to conduct roadshows and participate in international tradeshows to reach out to association executives and planners.

{ **Pre/Post** }



New stay option

The new AVANI Central Busan Hotel, located in the Munhyeon Finance Complex and a 15-minute drive from Busan Exhibition & Convention Centre, boasts 289 keys, the Sky Restaurant & Bar all-day dining restaurant, PANTRY at AVANI and an 800m² function space.

The hotel is a part of a mixed-use complex that includes offices, residences, a retail mall, and the largest theatre (1,800 seats)

in Busan capable of hosting international stage productions.

Its location makes it a convenient stay option for travellers attending events at the Busan Exhibition & Convention Centre, as well as those hoping to have a leisure extension in the city after their meetings. Popular tourist attractions, such as the Haeundae Beach and Sea Life Busan Aquarium, are close by.

Impressive temple

No visit to Busan is complete without a stop at the Haedong Yonggung Temple, a Buddhist temple built in 1376 atop rocky cliffs. The temple can be appreciated from a rocky path to its left, where on a good day visitors can see waves smashing against the temple's base. Within the temple grounds are elaborate architecture and numerous religious sculptures.

Tuck into freshly-caught seafood

The best place to do this in Busan is at Jagalchi Market, a bustling wet market where the day's harvest is laid out on plastic mats and low tables for picking. The array is mind-boggling; some seafood are familiar, while others are something out of National Geographic. When you are done marvelling at the raw harvest, venture into one of the many restaurants in the area to indulge in a seafood feast.

Explore a cultural village

The colourful houses and murals in Gamcheon Culture Village have made many appearances in tourist guide books. Make time to cast your own eyes on them.

Located on the foothills of a coastal mountain, Gamcheon Culture Village is made up of shops selling interesting trinkets, fashion accessories and art pieces, cafes, snack shops and homes. Its alleys are best explored on foot. Be sure to have your camera with you.



A wave of opportunities

Major redevelopment plans on Sentosa Island will help to lower venue costs, making the destination more appealing to associations, reports **Pamela Chow**

As Sentosa Island prepares to receive facilities catering to the mid-tier business segment, the destination is set to become more accessible to association meetings and conferences.

Until recently, the island had been populated by luxury properties and resorts, including Resorts World Sentosa, which had been a major factor in restricting the number of association meetings held there.

Cyril Constantino, Asia Pacific supplier management lead, CWT Meetings & Events, said: “The vast majority of events we have organised at Sentosa have been corporate events, and not association events. The hotels in Sentosa are typically priced slightly higher than those in the city as most of the options currently available are five-star hotels or luxury resorts.”

Associations that do visit Sentosa have mostly enjoyed pre- or post-conference programmes.

Lynette Ang, chief marketing officer, Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC), shared that the island has welcomed delegates of Rotary International with a customised message during the Wings of Time show, and hosted the Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers’ (SACEOS) Singapore MICE Forum gala dinner at Ola Beach Club on Siloso Beach.

The International Trademark Associa-

tion (INTA) has not organised conferences or meetings in Sentosa, but it has “visited Sentosa on exploratory visits for our special events”, shared Tricia Montero, INTA’s manager of education programme logistics.

“We focused on Universal Studios Singapore and S.E.A. Aquarium and The Maritime Experiential Museum. These venues are compact, but offer enough entertainment for large groups,” she noted.

Additionally, association meetings on the island are largely limited to smaller delegations. For example, SACEOS held C-level meetings before its Singapore MICE Forum 2018 at both the Glass

Pavilion of Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa, and the TreeTop Lofts of the Equarius Hotel, and the Asia Business Meet in 2017 and 2018 featured a 3D2N programme for 25 delegates on the island.

Now, more affordable accommodation options have risen in Sentosa, which is expected to gain points with association planners. This month, Far East Hospitality (FEH) opens the 606-room Village Hotel at Sentosa, and the 193-key adults-only The Outpost Hotel.

Then in 3Q2019, the Barracks Hotel will open its 40 rooms within a conserved colonial building. All three properties will be priced in the mid-tier range, and boost Sentosa’s total room count to 4,200.

“The additional capacity being added by FEH will be welcomed by meeting and event planners as rates have been rising significantly on the island due to limited availability,” said Constantino.

He opined: “We expect the Village Hotel at Sentosa to generate considerable interest for corporate meetings and events, as it will provide a more cost-effective option compared to most of the alternatives which tend to be high-end luxury properties.”

Montero pointed out that while the cluster “may help attract more association events”, the properties must “take



Far East Hospitality



From top: A rendering of meeting rooms – within the Events Centre – at Village Hotel at Sentosa; aerial view of Sentosa



“... we can expect the curation of new attractions, improvement of transport connectivity, enhancement of our popular golden beaches, as well as MICE facilities.”

Lynette Ang

Chief marketing officer,
Sentosa Development Corporation

into account the cost sensitivity of associations when quoting DDRs and hotel rates”. What would make the island even more attractive would be more large special event venues, perhaps by the beach, she suggested.

Joanna Wong, director, Singapore Institute of Accredited Tax Professionals, remarked: “Considering everyone is looking for unique experiences, association event organisers would certainly appreciate any suggestions from venue owners as well. It would be ideal if Sentosa and the various offerings on the island collaborate to meet these needs in a seamless way for event organisers especially for associations that run on extremely lean resources.”

In the near future, Sentosa will be further expanded to provide more leisure and business facilities.

SDC's Ang told *TTGassociations*: “Sentosa will be jointly developed as part of the Greater Southern Waterfront precinct, and we can expect the curation of new attractions, improvement of transport connectivity, enhancement of our popular golden beaches, as well as MICE facilities.”

The redevelopments have urged the island's tenants to reach out to the associations segment.

For example, W Singapore – Sentosa Cove will look into hosting association events as “part of (its) plans for 2019”, said Rex Loh, cluster director of sales & marketing.

“(Our location) is well suited for any association's spin-off, offsite committee, or board meetings; the hotel offers a different ambience as it's by the marina. In addition, it features unique spaces such as the W Lawn that make an ideal venue for offsite events,” said Loh.

{ Need to know }

1 Goings-on about the island

Sentosa has a calendar of events and promotions that planners can tie in with their meetings or post-conference programmes. Check out sentosa.com.sg to stay updated on seasonal activities and campaigns on the island.

2 Conveniently located

Far East Hospitality's new property cluster is situated above the bus park of Sentosa Island, making it a convenient pick-up and drop-off point for delegates.

3 Smoother transaction for Chinese travellers

Planners hosting Chinese delegates should take note that Sentosa, Singapore Tourism Board and Alipay have collaborated to launch Alipay's payment solutions across 70 per cent of merchants that participate in the Sentosa Islander Membership programme.

{ Pre/Post }



A sky-high dining experience

The Singapore Cable Car, which runs between Sentosa and Harbourfront on the main island, now offers several dining packages on its Sentosa leg. There are fine-dining experience Dining on Cloud 9, and group packages with a picnic-in-the-sky concept, for up to four pax per cabin.

Virtual fun

In November last year, Korean virtual reality (VR) theme park HeadRock VR made its entry into the Singapore market, opening 11 VR rides in Resorts World Sentosa. The rides span different concepts from adventure to horror, and will be updated every six months to a year.



TTG Travel Trade Publishing is proud to be the travel trade media partner of the ASEAN Tourism Competitive Committee, working together to support the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy and promote ASEAN destinations for tourism and business events



Great vibes at night

Plan a sunset get-together at Bay Hotel's Propeller rooftop bar, where cocktails can be enjoyed as delegates catch the sun setting over Sentosa's skyline. Located across the linkway to Sentosa, Bay Hotel also runs seasonal and themed events and promotions.

Favourable winds blow

Shanghai and Beijing are going strong with global association meetings, aided by new hardware and improved international air access, but their sister cities are taking strategic moves to also win on the associations front. By **Caroline Boey**



Shanghai, China's second top meetings city, is facing stronger domestic competition for association events

For the last 10 years, Beijing and Shanghai have remained China's top two cities that meet ICCA's international association meetings criteria, with the latest figures from 2017 (2018 results will only be released in May 2019) revealing the cities garnered 81 and 61 events respectively.

Noor Ahmad Hamid, ICCA regional director, Asia-Pacific, shared: "Beijing and Shanghai are the top-two meetings destinations for a few obvious reasons. They are first-tier cities with the highest connectivity, they are where many Chinese national associations are located, and both have great meeting facilities."

ICCA's top official in the region however, pointed out that other Chinese cities are becoming more aggressive and strategic to attract international associations.

"Some have embarked on their own congress ambassador incentive programmes to attract international associations with strategic promotional campaigns. And while I can't single out any

cities in particular, many of the second- and third-tier cities are working hard to win in this space," Noor noted.

Meanwhile, Patrick Chen, deputy director International Promotion Department, Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration, said the international associations sector for the city has remained "stable for the last two years" as meetings were confirmed three to five years in advance.

"... while Beijing is more attractive for pre- or post-meeting sightseeing programmes, the easy access from Shanghai to nearby Suzhou and Hangzhou via high-speed rail provides new pre-/post-event options."

Kin Qin

Deputy general manager,
Century Holiday International Travel Group

Chen commented: "International technology and medical association meetings are strong and corporate meetings – up to 3Q2018 – have increased."

He attributed the good results to developments such as the September launch of the daily Hong Kong-Shanghai high-speed rail service, the introduction of direct flights such as the Atlanta-Shanghai flights, and the increase in the number of countries (from 51 to 53) with visa-free entry privileges.

"For 2019, the outlook will depend on China's economic development but growth for international association meetings should continue to be stable," he forecasted.

Meanwhile, Kin Qin, deputy general manager, Century Holiday International Travel Group, said the continued increase in air capacity and hotel inventory in Shanghai has made the city a popular destination.

"There are a lot of air access choices to Shanghai and the supply of new hotels has been increasing over the last two years," Qin said.

Industry observers further added that new developments such as the opening of the Shanghai EDITION hotel with nine different F&B venues, and Columbia Circle – a revived historical area with numerous F&B concepts with lots of event potential – are enhancing the city's appeal as a meetings destination.

Another example is the newly renovated and extended Shanghai History Museum, which now contains a 9,800m² exhibition area, with around 1,100 artefacts on display.

Julien Delerue, founder and CEO, 1000meetings, an RFP technology platform, observed strong room demand in Shanghai and rising hotels rates, which



he said was a sign that the market was doing well.

Qin continued: "Our company handled ground arrangements for a 160-delegate European medical association meeting in Beijing in 2017, and while Beijing is more attractive for pre- or post-meeting sightseeing programmes, the easy access from Shanghai to nearby Suzhou and Hangzhou via high-speed rail provides new pre-/post-event options."

Among international carriers, Delta Air Lines' route expansion is most promising for China's association meetings growth. Delta launched a non-stop daily service between Shanghai Pudong International Airport and the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in July 2018, linking China's business centre and the airline's US hub, which offers more than 1,000 departures a day.

Wong Hong, president of Delta, Greater China, noted that the new service complements Delta's existing direct flights between Shanghai and Detroit, Seattle and Los Angeles.

"Together with two non-stop daily flights from Beijing to Detroit and Seattle, Delta now operates 42 departures per week between the two countries," he added.

In January 2018, Delta introduced its new aircraft, the Airbus A350-900 from Beijing to Detroit, the first airline to operate the A350 on China-US flights. The A350 also started to serve the Shanghai (Pudong)-Detroit route and the Shanghai (Pudong)-Los Angeles route in April and July respectively.

"With the launch of the Shanghai-Atlanta service and the new aircraft A350 serving half of Delta's China-US routes, Delta's capacity in the China-US aviation market has seen 23 per cent year-on-year growth," Wong stated.

Affirming the positive market sentiment, Violet Wang, destination manager, Pacific World China, shared that most hotels in the country "are really optimistic at least until the end of 2019". The DMC has strong partnerships with China's five-star hotels.

Apart from Beijing and Shanghai, industry observers also commented that the opening of the Hong Kong-Zuhai-Macau Bridge in 3Q2018, and the upcoming opening of the US\$3.9 billion mega Shenzhen International Convention and Exhibition Center in September, are both expected to spur business and growth opportunities.

Qin, who is based in Shenzhen, is hopeful the 1Q2018 merger of Ministry of Culture and the China National Tourism Administration to become the Ministry of Culture and Tourism would result in dialogue between government and the industry on policy and regulations and spur growth of China's inbound events industry.

{ Need to know }

1 Book venues early

Beijing is still very limited when it comes to non-hotel venues while the more exciting locations are booked up quickly during spring and fall. Unlike Shanghai, the capital has had no notable increase in hotel inventory.

2 A bigger budget is better

Have a good budget if choosing Shanghai. China is not cheap and a high level of service is as expensive as any major city in Asia. Suzhou and Hangzhou, 1.5 hours and under 2.5 hours respectively away from Shanghai via high-speed rail, are up-and-coming event destination alternatives.

3 A new venue will soon enter the scene

The mega Shenzhen International Convention and Exhibition Center in the southern part of the country is scheduled to open in September 2019. The facility will house the world's largest indoor exhibition space at 500,000m², as well as 100,000m² of meeting space.

{ Pre/Post }

Culture cultures

For a unique cultural experience, visitors can watch a Peking Opera performance in Beijing or pay a visit to an Opera Art School and observe the actors' daily training, speak with them and learn some basics.

Although it is called Peking Opera, the art form did not originate in Beijing but in Anhui and Hubei. Performance troupes visited the capital around the 18th century and combined local styles to create the present art form.



Hung Chung Chin/shutterstock

Chill out after a long day

For a relaxing after-dinner activity in Beijing, Garden by Cink Pictures is a boutique cinema, bar, restaurant and function venue rolled into one. Set on the rooftop of the original Cink Pictures on North Taikoo Li, the Garden is part open-air lounge, part screening space and boasts a spacious bar area. The restaurant serves up contemporary seafood and New England-style cuisine, alongside plenty of Instagramable moments.

See the city on two wheels

There are millions of bicycles in Beijing and all major roads have at least one lane devoted to cyclists. During off-peak hours and when the weather is good, a cycling tour with is a great way to explore the city. Do take time to spend some time at attractions such as the city's ancient walls, Red Gate Gallery, Tiananmen Square, Pearl Market and Temple of Heaven.

Delve into Shanghai's history

Cycling around Shanghai's historic district under the watchful eye of an expert tour leader is a good way for visitors to discover a local and rustic perspective of the glittering and modern Paris of the East.

The cycling tour will take visitors down the narrow lanes of the former French Concession and the lively, traditional open market of the remaining Old Town.



Pacific World China

Ideas courtesy of Pacific World China

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