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A man with many hats in the associations space, Octavio B Peralta talks about his true love for the profession of associations management

THE ASSOCIATION MAN



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Levels of accessibility

Having grown up with an aunt who is physically disabled due to polio and reliant on a wheelchair (but who is also fiercely independent and commands a house cleaner than mine), I am aware from a young age of the facilities necessary for her ease of movement in public spaces.

I thought I was sufficiently savvy about what a disabled individual would need beyond the safe haven that is his/her home, but when I read the *Universal Accessibility in Meetings* report published by BestCities Alliance, GainingEdge and Rehabilitation International, I realised there are far more considerations to be made. Plus, there are also people with sensorial, cognitive and medical disabilities and special needs – needs that are invisible to strangers around them but no less challenging to manage than a physical impairment.

Very much humbled, I sought to understand the extent of universal access convention centres in Asia-Pacific offer to support inclusive meetings and to provide that information to our readers (*Guide to universally accessible centres*, pages 15-18).

My team and I sent out feelers to venues in this region. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that most venues in South-east Asia satisfy only the bare minimum for

people with the more common mobility and visual disabilities. Wheelchair ramps, designated handicap parking lots and wheelchair-access toilets are common; elevators control panels with Braille markings and tactile paving across the venue, a little less so.

Harder to spot are more extensive provisions of Braille markings (such as on wayfinders) and staff trained in basic sign language to aid persons who are hard of hearing.

What about services for people with invisible needs, such as those sensitive to sudden flashes of light or loud sounds? Are regular venue staff sufficiently trained, for instance, to recognise anxiety seizures in autistic attendees and not mistake that for rowdy behaviour that calls for security attention?

What about facilities for non-medical special needs? Most convention centres in big cities offer baby-changing facilities, but few provide nursing rooms for the growing number of working mothers who are determined to maintain breastfeeding capability while travelling for work and attending business events.

The *Universal Accessibility in Meetings* report is a good place for venues and meeting planners to start some serious conversations and considerations about being truly welcoming for everyone.



Karen Yue
Group Editor

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The association man

A man with many hats in the associations space, Octavio B Peralta, tells [Rosa Ocampo](#) about his true love for the profession of associations management and recounts his ongoing journey of raising the standards of associations and the job of managing one in Asia-Pacific



GUIDE TO

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Universally accessible centres

As congresses move to involve more members of the community, venues that host these gatherings must also be welcoming for people with varying levels of physical and sensorial abilities. *TTGassociations* checks out how some Asian convention centres measure up on universal accessibility



DESTINATIONS



Macau // Stronger attraction points

Macau's unique blend of old and new, and improved access from Hong Kong and China, are coming together to attract meeting planners, writes [Prudence Lui](#)



Malaysia // So close, so good

For associations looking to avoid big city prices for their events, Selangor – with its cheaper meeting and entertainment options but sitting close to Kuala Lumpur – may just be the answer. By [S Puvaneswary](#)

DEPARTMENTS

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Philippines makes move on two major 2021 conferences

By Rosa Ocampo

The Philippines government has announced that it will be making bids to host the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) General Assembly, and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) Global Summit, both scheduled for 2021.

Tourism secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat declared that the country is “ready”.

She added that the country is “bullish in the pursuit” of hosting the two major events, after having successfully hosted Routes Asia 2018 and this year’s PATA Annual Summit, both held in Cebu City.

UNWTO’s General Assembly, a global meeting of senior tourism officials and high level private sector representatives, is held every two years. It will be hosted by the Russian Federation this year. Chengdu, China played host in 2017.

Meanwhile, the annual WTTC Global Summit was held in Seville, Spain re-

cently in April while last year’s was in Argentina.

The business event sector is being considered a “new initiative” for the Philippines government, and the 2019 work programme of the Department of Tourism and its marketing arm, Tourism Promotions Board, has indicated inten-

tions to bid for “big ticket events”.

The country is also keen on other major events such as UNESCO Creative Cities Network Annual Conferences.

Last year, the country launched its MICE roadmap to reclaim the destination’s place as a business events powerhouse.



Tourism secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat

Barcelona, US drew largest gatherings in 2018: ICCA

ICCA’s 2018 Statistics Report has identified Barcelona and the US as the top performing city and country, respectively, in terms of association meeting attendance.

In 2018, Barcelona becomes the number one city by estimated total number of participants (134,838), despite the fact that the Spanish city hosted 49 events less than Paris, the number one city by number of meetings.

The study concluded that Barcelona hosted fewer but larger events. Paris and Vienna, respectively first and second in the ranking by number of meetings, take

second and third position.

As for country rankings, the US holds pole position with an estimated total of 384,035 participants hosted in 2018. Spain, Germany, France and Canada takes up the remaining top five positions.

Asian presence on ICCA’s top 10 countries chart is provided by Japan at eighth spot and China at 10th, while the top 10 cities chart sees Singapore at the tail end.

The ICCA report also looked at the 55-year growth of the international association meetings market. It found that the exponential growth trend seen in the market has slowly matured while retaining “solid” growth patterns between 2013 and 2017.

The association meetings sector continues to diversify, in terms of terms of regional rotation area and regional popularity for hosting business events. Europe remains by far the most popular region for association meetings, but Asia-Pacific and the Middle East are rapidly expanding their share of the market.

Medical Science (16.9 per cent), Technology (14.2 per cent) and Science (13.5 per cent) are the three most popular international association meeting topics. September remains the most popular month for organising international association meetings.

Malaysia chalks up wins for two 2020 conferences

Two congresses will be heading to Kuala Lumpur next year in 2020 – the 46th ITA-AITES World Tunnel Congress (WTC) and the International Congress on Infectious Diseases (ICID).

Taking place between May 15-21, 2020, the WTC event will bring together more than 1,500 engineers, designers, and construction professionals to Malaysia, and generate an economic impact of approximately RM21 million (US\$5 million). It will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

The theme of the seven-day event will focus on multiple technical paper presentations, tunnelling training courses, poster presentations, the ITA-AITES General Assembly, technical visits to ongoing tunnelling projects in Malaysia, and interesting exhibitions by companies from all over the world presenting their latest tunnelling solutions, innovations and technologies.

Also to be held at the same venue in 2020 is the ICID international congress. Over 3,000 medical professionals from 102 countries are expected to attend, and the event is expected to deliver a RM14.5 million economic boost to the country.

Both congresses are supported by the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau.



Water treatment experts return to Dubai

The International Desalination Association's IDA World Congress will return to Dubai after a decade, with the event planned for October 20 to 24, 2019.

Adopting the theme, Crossroads to Sustainability, the event is expected to be attended by more than 1,500 delegates from around the world.

Said to be the premier global event on advanced water treatment solutions, the congress is hosted by the Dubai Electricity & Water Authority.

"Predictions are that 2019 will see the most active growth in seawater desalination since the late 2000s, while water reuse has become an increasingly important part of water resources management around the world. We've designed this event as a venue not only to gain knowledge, but also to exchange perspectives, network and make valuable connections, with several new features that encourage dialogue and interaction," said Shannon McCarthy, IDA secretary general.

The centrepiece of the congress is a four-day Technical Program. With more than 300 papers among 10 technical topics, the Technical Program will explore a broad range of desalination and water reuse technologies, practices and experiences from around the world, recognising that resources and requirements can vary based on location, climate conditions and natural resources.

The congress will also include the World Congress Exhibition, the IDA Leaders Summit and the IDA-Affiliate Majlis Discussion Forums.

It's a win for RCOG World Congress 2018

Ace:Daytons Direct (International), Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists & Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society of Singapore collectively took home the Best Association Conference Organiser for their RCOG World Congress 2018 at the Singapore Tourism Awards 2019 on May 9.

The congress was held in the city state on March 21 to 24 last year, drawing more than 3,160 attendees from 82 countries.



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Setia

4WCWS to bring Asian gender issues to focus

By Caroline Boey

The 4th World Conference of Women's Shelters (4WCWS), the marquee event of the Global Network of Women's Shelters (GNWS), is taking place in Asia for the first time from November 5 to 7, 2019 in Kaohsiung.

The Garden of Hope Foundation (GOH), Taiwan's largest non-profit organisation for women and girls, and winner of the Asia-Pacific NGO of the Year Award in 2004, was selected as host of 4WCWS in recognition of its work.

GOH, formed in 1988, operates 15 shelters in Taiwan and has established sister organisations, shelters and programmes in New York, Cape Town and Phnom Penh.

According to GOH CEO Chi Hui-Jung, who was selected chairperson of GNWS in 2018, the Taiwanese government "is providing a large amount of support to make this conference happen".

Government agencies involved include the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Culture, each providing different resources in areas such as funding, venues, accommodation, event performances, and invitations, with subsidised air travel, for international VIPs.



A recent GOH campaign in Taiwan

About 1,500 participants from 120 countries are expected to attend 4WCWS, Chi said.

The event is aimed at strengthening the role of women shelters in systematic approaches to combat violence against women; to kick-start global projects and initiatives; to raise awareness – among governments, international organisations, the corporate sector and the general public about the problems of violence against women – and stimulate responsible action to support women's shelter organisations; and to reinforce, mobilise, and increase the effectiveness and influence of GNWS and the regional networks as leaders in the effort to end violence against women.

Chi said the event in Kaohsiung



Chi: Opportunities for new perspectives

would provide the opportunity to discuss gender issues and women's rights in the East, and what can be learned from the Asian perspective.

"Exchange within the Asian sheltering network is extremely active. Since gender-related problems in the East are different from those in advanced Western nations as a result of cultural differences, the services for women that have developed in the East could be looked at alongside those of the West so that people in both regions can learn from each other," she noted, and expressed hoped that more Asian women's organisations would be able to attend the Kaohsiung event.

Chi commented: "In addition to sharing the viewpoints and experiences of Asian service providers and women's rights activists, the event will also allow for more resources from advanced Western countries to be funneled to needy Asian regions."

The first WCWS was held in 2008 in Edmonton. It was attended by 800 participants from 51 countries. 2WCWS was held in Washington DC in 2012 with 1,500 participants from 96 countries and speakers included former US president Bill Clinton, actress Reese Witherspoon and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark. 3WCWS was held at the Hague in 2015 with 1,000 participants from 115 countries and speakers included Queen Maxima of the Netherlands and Hollywood actress Ashley Judd.

Space researchers pick Adelaide for meeting



The 19th Australian Space Research Conference (ASRC) will head to Adelaide this coming September.

The Adelaide Convention Bureau said in a press statement that the ASRC win was due to the city being named home of Australia's Space Agency in December 2018 and having successfully hosted the 68th International Astronautical Congress 2017 (IAC).

The Australian Space Agency will be located at Lot Fourteen on the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site by mid-2019.

Also in Adelaide's favour was a "solid bid presentation", said the bureau, plus the opportunity ASRC decision makers had to experience Adelaide's best during the annual Destination South Australia showcase event in 2018.

To be held from September 30 to October 2, 2019, the conference will run in conjunction with the South Aus-

tralia Space Forum, convened by the South Australian Space Industry Centre.

Both fundamental and applied research on space science, engineering and technologies will be discussed at the conference, which is intended as the primary annual meeting for Australian researchers in space science and technology.

It will bring space scientists, engineers, educators, and workers in industry, government and NGOs to Adelaide.

Damien Kitto, CEO of Adelaide Convention Bureau, said: "This is the one of many business events within the space and defence category that the bureau will bring to South Australia in the years to come. The legacies of these events, as was the legacy of the IAC, will continue to provide opportunities for innovation, investment and trade to South Australia."

Anderes Fourdy sharpens PCO capability

Professional congress organiser (PCO) and association management company Anderes Fourdy has taken over fellow Malaysian organiser, Crest Evendz, in an effort to expand its congress delivery capability.

With the acquisition, the company will now be named Anderes Fourdy Events and welcome more industry talents such as Amy Yu and Rachel Loke, both respected veterans and professionals in the Malaysian business events space.

Crest Evendz's existing clients will benefit from the various congress technologies developed in-house by Anderes Fourdy, which include bespoke systems for registration, abstracts, logistics and association membership.

The expanded business will also afford Anderes Fourdy's founders Fu Kei Cheong and Rahul Bharadwaj more time to strengthen their business events con-

Global travel body meets in Colombo in aid of Sri Lanka's recovery

By Feizal Samath

An international body of travel agents, the Universal Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA), has announced plans to hold its next meeting in Sri Lanka to support the destination which took a devastating hit in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks on April 21.

UFTAA president Sunil Kumar Rumalla told reporters in Colombo in mid-May: "UFTAA board member, Trevor Rajaratnam, appealed to us to try and look at Sri Lanka as a destination for our next immediate event which is normally held in August (in another country)."

Rajaratnam, who is also the president of the Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka, told *TTGassociations* that he was preparing a formal letter to UFTAA's board of directions to look into meeting earlier in Colombo in June or July.

Some 100 tourism leaders and experts from 30 countries are expected to attend.

Rumalla also informed reporters that the event was fast-tracked by a month or so as it could "serve as a message to the whole world that a global body of tourism experts and leaders is present in Sri Lanka".

He added UFTAA is committed to supporting Sri Lanka, similar to its support



of Turkey to rebuild confidence in the country in the aftermath of terrorist attacks there three years ago.

"We are very keen to see that this most wonderful country is brought back to normalcy as soon as possible," Rumalla shared.

In the meantime, Emirates and SriLankan Airlines have pledged their support to facilitate the UFTAA mid-year forum by offering concessionary airfare to delegates coming to Sri Lanka.

Hotels are also expected to offer concessionary rates for foreign delegates attending the forum.

UFTAA is also considering holding an event at one of the hotels hit by the Easter Sunday attacks.

More than 250 people including 40 tourists died in the attacks on three churches and three luxury hotels in Colombo.

UFTAA has yet to confirm meeting dates at press time.



sulting work and develop an international franchise system for PCOs.

Fu said in a statement: "Many of our industry friends have invited us to collaborate with them in their respective countries. We are always happy to share, and this merger provides us the opportunity to expand what we love to do. You'll be hearing from us in different countries."

Bharadwaj added: "With this merger, we have the added benefit of a greater capacity to serve a larger client base and deliver more congresses while upholding our exacting standards of client servicing."

{ Bureau brief }

Australian bureaux power up intel

Destinations International, a global community of over 5,000 professionals from 600 destinations around the world, has signed an MoU with the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB).

The MoU is the first stage in a long-term collaboration, which will enable the two organisations to share knowledge, connections and research.

Together, Destinations International and AACB will join forces with Tourism Economics to develop and deliver an Australian version of the Event Impact Calculator (EIC). The tool allows destinations to analyse the economic value of an event or convention and quantify the return on investment.

TCEB builds foreign alliance

Thailand has signed an MoU with the FCA (Foreign Chamber Alliance; representing Australia, Germany, the US and the UK) to push the development of the country's MICE business in long-haul markets. The FCA has more than 20,000 members that include businessmen, investors, entrepreneurs from business, industrial and service sectors.

This is the very first time that the Foreign Chamber Alliance has signed an MoU with a Thai government agency, and the collaboration will see the creation of a framework for the development of the business events sector.

Sabah CVB on hold

A reliable source within the Sabah Convention Bureau is correcting the misconception that the formation of the body has been terminated by the Sabah State Government, stating that the process has instead only been put on hold.

Since its inception in January 2018 until January this year, the source described the bureau as being "in-transition" while waiting for its endorsement from the state government.

It is understood that staff from Sabah Tourism Board's MICE unit who were seconded to the future bureau have temporarily returned to the parent.

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Let's meet in the gardens

Pattaya's latest attraction is beckoning meeting planners, enticing them with an opportunity to meet differently – outdoors and among pretty blooms.

Flowerland Pattaya, opened in December 2018, is located in Map Prachan Lake in the eastern part of the Thai resort town. Spanning 16.2 hectares, it is said to be the largest garden in Pattaya

The attraction displays a wide range of flora from tropical locations as well as cold countries. Highlights include the viewpoint zone which has an iconic bridge where visitors could take photos, an aquarium and four domes housing plants from temperate lands.

There is also a large fountain that dances to lights and sounds, creating spectacular 3D shows.

Flowerland Pattaya welcomes venue hires, and allows its outdoor areas to be transformed into platforms on which to create corporate events and activities, such as conferences, meetings and teambuilding programmes.

The cost of hiring venues at Flowerland Pattaya start from 5,000 baht (US\$156) for the small meeting rooms, up to 85,000 baht for both indoor and outdoor spaces, excluding F&B cost. Should F&B be required, the garden will also be able to make suitable arrangements.

Jewel Changi Airport unveils event plaza up in the clouds

Located within Jewel Changi Airport on the topmost floor, Cloud9 Piazza is an ideal space for Changi Airport Group's (CAG) airport community and travel industry partners to hold aviation-related, community and experiential events.

The naturally-lit area can host between 200 to 500 people, depending on event layout, requirements and setting. CAG will work with event owners and organisers to co-create events at Jewel.

The first event held at the Cloud9 Event Piazza was the Changi Airline Awards on April 25, followed by a travel retail charity event, The Moodie Davitt Report 2019 Duty Calls Charity Dinner, on May 11.

During events, the public continue to be able to access the eateries on level 5 and the Canopy Park attractions.



Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo floats out new venue for hire

Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo in Sri Lanka has unveiled 8° on the Lake, billing it as the city's first mobile floating venue in a five-star hotel.

The floating venue on Beira Lake boasts an open show-kitchen, two air-conditioned decks, a translucent roof and minimalistic, white interiors that can accommodate over 100 people. It is suitable for private events, business luncheons or intimate cocktail evenings.

Event planners can choose to float the pontoon during sunset for delegates to enjoy the stars through the translucent roof after; or dock it as an extension to the waterside or the hotel's garden venue equipped with a pier.





Dusit expands in the Philippines

Dusit International has expanded its presence in the Philippines with the opening of two properties in Mactan and Davao.

The five-star Dusit Thani Mactan Cebu is located beachside on the scenic Punta Engaño peninsula of Mactan island, approximately 10km from Cebu City in the Central Visayas region. The resort will feature 272 guestrooms with views of the Magellan Sea, alongside facilities such as a 100m-long infinity pool, spa, fitness centre, and several dining venues.

Event planners may avail the largest ballroom in Mactan, the 1,200m² Dusit Ballroom, and four meeting rooms, as well as an outdoor Sky Garden for teambuilding activities or cocktail receptions.

Meanwhile, dusitD2 Davao has opened with an initial 60 rooms and suites, with another 60 slated to open later this year. Hotel facilities include a courtyard swimming pool, the Madayaw Café all-day dining restaurant, Siam Lounge, a fitness centre and the Namm Spa.

Guests can also arrange for day trips to The Beach Club at Lubi Plantation Island, Managed by Dusit, a private island retreat a 30-minute boat ride off the coast of the Davao Gulf.

Besides Dusit Thani Mactan Cebu and dusitD2 Davao, other Dusit-branded hotels set to open this year include Dusit Thani Residence Davao hotel (2Q), which will open adjacent to dusitD2 Davao; and dusitD2 The Fort Manila, which will open as part of the Dusit Hospitality Management College in August.

With two properties currently in operation (namely Dusit Thani Manila and The Beach Club at Lubi Plantation Island, Managed by Dusit), 12 signed and another seven in the pipeline, the Philippines promises to become Dusit's largest cluster country by 2021. This also puts Dusit on course to become one of the largest international hotel operators in the Philippines.

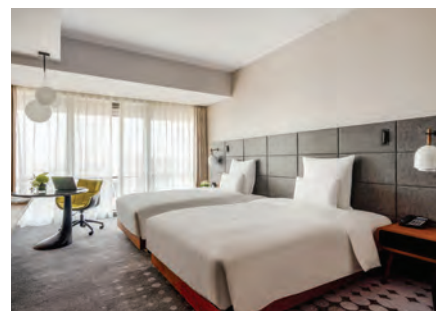
Pullman pulls up in Inner Mongolia's CBD

Pullman has opened its first property in North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, located within a mixed-use complex in Baotou's CBD.

Each of its 263 Mongolian-inspired guestrooms and suites proffer views of either the Saihantala Ecological Park, or garden, while leisure facilities include a gym, indoor swimming pool, and spa.

There are several F&B options on-site – the Les Champs-Élysées Lobby Bar; Bordeaux House with its sharing dishes; Silk Pavilion with its Huaiyang and fusion cuisine; and the all-day-diner Le Fontainebleau restaurant.

Event planners may choose from Pullman Baotou's nine meeting spaces, which include the 1,400m² grand ballroom for 1,200 pax theatre-style or 720 in a banquet setting. Adjacent to the grand ballroom is an outdoor terrace suitable for evening cocktails, or pre/



post-function mingles.

In addition, Silk Pavilion restaurant has 10 private rooms that can cater to business luncheons.

Pullman Baotou stands adjacent to Baotou Municipal Government, International Convention and Exhibition Center, and Olympic Sports Centre Stadium. It is a 20-minute drive to the airport and the city's train station, as well as Baotou's historic downtown.

LN Garden Hotel opens in Guangzhou

LN Garden Hotel Nansha boasts a strategic location at the heart of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the southernmost district about an hour's drive from the city centre of Guangzhou.

Designed by Croatian studio 3LHD, the property is home to 365 rooms and suites, some of which offering balconies with views of the surrounding mountains, gardens and waters.

Opportunities for recreation and relaxation include a heated indoor swimming pool, outdoor pool and fully-equipped gymna-

sium. For outdoor activities, guests can ride along the waterfront cycling trail, try their hand at the hotel's 36-hole golf course, cruise the shoreline, or visit the Thean Hou Temple, Sunflower Garden and Nansha Wetland.

There are three F&B options on-site: Chinese restaurant Peach Blossom, international buffet restaurant Café Flora and barbecue specialties at Grill.

For large-scale events, event planners can consider LN Garden Hotel Nansha's Grand Ballroom – a 2,000m² pillarless banquet area featuring a full-length glass wall with views of the surrounding landscape.

The hotel also has seven meeting rooms of various sizes, as well as a 1,000m² lawn facing the sea, making it the perfect place for a bespoke cocktail parties for corporate clients.

Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport are just a 60- and 90-minute drive away respectively, while the ferry terminal is a mere 10-minute drive away for those looking to take a 75-minute ferry ride to Hong Kong.



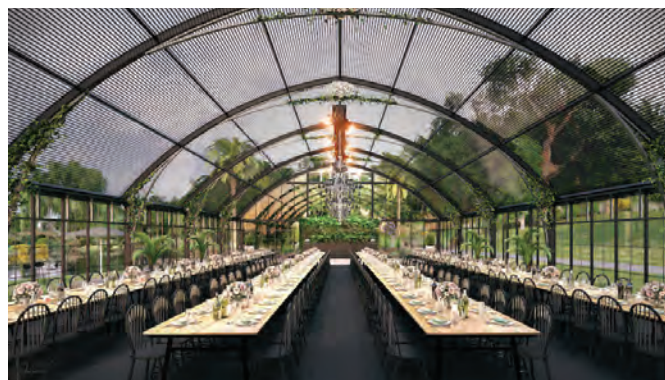
Pop-up venue coming to Melbourne's iconic gardens

Australian boutique catering company Blakes Feast has joined forces with Harry the Hirer to create a pop-up event space at Melbourne's iconic Royal Botanical Gardens.

Called The Atrium, the conservatory-like structure will stand at Dog Flat from December 6-22, 2019. The function space boasts a cathedral roof, glass panelling offering panoramic views, three-metre high walls, a terrace and a circular-shaped truss – all encased within a black powder-coated aluminium frame.

Accommodating 350 pax cocktail-style or 240 seated guests, the space is suitable for private parties, installations, as well as corporate gatherings.

Blake's Feast has created three premium menu packages featuring seasonal ingredients for The Atrium: cocktail, plated and banquet; as well as three beverage packages featuring curated wine lists from local producers.



A welcome fit for everyone

As society becomes more inclusive, so must destinations and meeting suppliers if they hope to win global meetings, some of which are attended by delegates with disabilities and special needs. By **Mimi Hudoyo**, **Rosa Ocampo** and **Karen Yue**

A partnership involving BestCities Global Alliance, GainingEdge and Rehabilitation International has given birth to an 89-page tome, *Universal Accessibility in Meetings*, which contains recommendations for convention bureaux, tourism and event suppliers and meeting planners to make business events more accessible and inclusive for all people.

The research looks at the needs of disabled and special needs people across a broad range, from physical mobility and senses (vision and hearing impairment), to cognitive/developmental (autism, Down Syndrome, dyslexia) and medical (autoimmune, allergies/diet, cancer, arthritis, etc.).

The authors emphasised the importance of understanding

universal accessibility within the business events industry as the prevalence of disability is growing due to population ageing and the global increase in non-communicable conditions including NCDs (non-communicable diseases), road traffic injuries and mental health problems.

Jane Vong Holmes, senior manager Asia with GainingEdge, said: "Around the world there is a call for universal accessibility in tourism, but for the business events industry this is still fairly unexplored territory, resulting in missed opportunities (for destinations and conference planners looking to win global meetings with disabled/special needs attendees)."

Ajit Singh Sikand, president and CEO of HBC Luxury MICE Consulting, noted that physically-challenged persons "have been excluded" from most business events although they "want to be as independent as other delegates – to be able to move around freely (in hotels, convention centres and airports), with signs and infrastructure that allow them to do so".

He opined that little was being done by hotels, convention centres and destinations, especially for the visually-impaired.

Most of the time destinations are not ready, lamented Rahul Bharadwaj, director technology & operations, of Malaysia-based PCO Anderes Fourdy.

For instance, the PCO handled the Rare Disease Asia Conference in 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, where out of the 500 attendees – comprising companies working on rare disease medical solutions, doctors and the patients – were some 100 wheelchair users.

Rahul shared: "For us, the challenge was to find and get hotels and venues ready for delegates with special needs – such as the setting up of ramps for wheelchair users to get onto stage, have the hotel remove some furniture to allow guests to move around more easily, and modify the seats on vans."

He added that the company had made bids for a few similar association meetings



from Europe, one of them with blind participants but lost it to France because there were no hotels in Malaysia that had braille signs for its facilities and on room doors. Moreover, no hotel or convention centre in Malaysia allowed guide dogs indoors.

Believing that Malaysia was still not ready, Rahul's company has stopped bidding for such meetings.

He opined that the tourism boards or event venues should resolve universal accessibility issues at business events, as they have the resources to do so.

Ajit suggested that the "community, government and cities" take the lead in starting the conversation on universal accessibility, and that governments enact laws that ensure transport modes are made easily accessible for physically-challenged travellers.

Holmes agrees, saying that destinations with strong universal accessibility often have supportive legislation in place.

"The stronger the legislation, the more numbers of accessible venues. The US, UK, Canada and Australia are some good examples. Although there are some venues that comply (because of the laws), there are others that go beyond their legal obligations, such as the Edinburgh International Conference Centre," Holmes said.

The Edinburgh International Conference Centre works with the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters to provide interpreters during conferences when required, and partners with The National Autistic Society to train its staff and cater to guests with

IDENTIFY ENABLERS



Identify and understand what enablers are required to promote and encourage universally accessible meetings in our industry.

ACCESS AUDIT



Develop a universal access audit checklist and minimum recommended standards for meeting organisers and destination suppliers.

BID SPECIFICATIONS



Address issues of universal accessibility within your bid specifications and bid evaluations.

TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES



Develop disability awareness and sensitivity training programmes for different disabilities. Engaging, through employment or volunteer programmes, people with disabilities in the workplace.

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES



Develop an Event Management Guide that incorporates universal accessibility guidelines in order to cater for people of all abilities. Rehabilitation International has prepared some guidelines in the Full Report which can be downloaded below.

What the planner community can do

Graphic by GainingEdge

autism spectrum conditions and sensory disabilities.

For attendees with autism spectrum conditions (ASC), sensory or additional needs, attending an event can be a daunting experience. The venue allocates quiet areas which can be used by delegates during the event, as well as seats outside the rooms if these guests need a break. Public address announcements can be preceded with a soft tune so that sound-sensitive guests are alerted that an announcement is upcoming. Slides are

placed on monitor screens for a longer time – about seven to 12 seconds longer than usual – for delegates to read and absorb the information.

In Singapore, multiple stakeholders such as the Building & Construction Authority, Land Transport Authority, Disabled People's Association Singapore as well as building

owners, attractions and places of interests are taking steps to make the island nation more accessible for all. There is even a S\$40 million (US\$29.3 million) Accessibility Fund available up to FY2021 which will provide for accessibility features for the visually and hearing-impaired. Owners of private buildings, especially those constructed almost 30 years ago, can apply for the fund to upgrade their properties. Seventy per cent of commercial and industrial buildings in Singapore are expected to be barrier-free by 2030.

One recommendation by the *Universal Accessibility in Meetings* study was that future venues should be de-

signed with universal accessibility in mind, while existing venues can be made more accessible for persons with disabilities (PWDs) by adding facilities such as accessible rest rooms, hotel rooms with doors wide enough for a wheelchair, and a ramp on the podium.

Venus Ilagan, Rehabilitation International's secretary-general, said: "If people with disabilities have to pay more to attend events or to get a hotel that has the right facilities, then that is not good. It should be one standard for all."

Ilagan further suggested that destinations look into the concept of universal design and go through the process of creating products from scratch, so that they do not have to make changes later.

She elaborated: "It would only be one per cent additional cost at the start when integrated at the planning stage of building, but if they have to have a post-build audit to analyse where the gaps are, the cost could be 35 to 40 per cent more to retrofit. Universal design should be looked at from the beginning, and not be an afterthought."

"Event organisers and providers of services in the travel and tourism industry need to embrace the concept of universal access. The disability market segment is large and has more discretionary income than other coveted market segments, representing an opportunity for event organisers and providers of services."

Terry Howard

Executive director,
Alpha Iota Delta Decision Sciences Institute



Holmes: unexplored territory for events

Octavio B Peralta

The association man

A man with many hats in the associations space, Octavio B Peralta, tells **Rosa Ocampo** about his true love for the profession of associations management and recounts his ongoing journey of raising the standards of associations and the job of managing one in Asia-Pacific

You hold many titles: secretary-general for Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP); founder, president and CEO of the Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives (PCAAE); and pro-tem head of secretariat, Asia-Pacific Federation of Association Organizers (APFAO). How did you enter the world of associations?

I'm a mechanical engineer by education and training. I worked for two years as a quality control engineer and then production engineer at the now-defunct Delta Motor Corp., which was the assembler of Toyota cars, Daikin air-conditioners and Sharp refrigerators.

Attracted by a development mission, better pay, and an opportunity to travel around the country, I moved to the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and worked there for 15 years in various capacities, starting as a technical (engineering) analyst and moving on to loan officer. I was then put in charge of training for loan officers, a role that exposed me to the sphere of education – design and delivery of training courses – which became handy when I eventually entered the world of associations.

I also worked for almost a year as a training officer of a learning institution in Washington, D.C. run by retired World Bank officers. One of them connected me to Orlando Pena, then secretary general of ADFIAP, an international membership organisation for development banks. In March 1991, he recruited me as his deputy and I succeeded him in 2005, a position I still hold today.

That's 28 years with ADFIAP, half of it as its head. How was it learning the ropes of association management which was then – and still is – quite a novel concept in the Philippines?

I found early in ADFIAP that working in an association is not at all a walk in the park. I tried in vain to get knowledge resources here on association management

so I can self-learn. Having found none, I joined as a member of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) whose headquarters is in Washington, D.C. and every time I had the opportunity to travel to D.C. as part of my work in ADFIAP, I bought books on association management.

Up till today, I am still an active member of ASAE and currently a member of its advisory task force for the Association Leadership Forum Asia-Pacific.

How did PCAAE come about? Guide us through its gestation.

Against this backdrop and with my experience on having to learn association management the hard way, I have always toyed with the idea of someday sharing my experience in association management and helping associations here in the Philippines by forming an “association of associations”.

Fate has it that as part of my work in ADFIAP, I get invited to attend fully-hosted business events which I found very relevant to my work as an association executive.

In these events, I met many contacts, and two of them were the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) general manager, Rene Padilla, and the late Stanie Soriano of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB). Although I met them on separate occasions and at different times, I proposed that they support my idea of putting together associations and association executives in the country. Luck has also been on my side when both expressed interest in supporting the idea and were also thinking along the same line.

After two years, in 2013, the three organisations – ADFIAP, PICC and TPB – finally moved the idea forward, with the understanding the ADFIAP will be the secretariat, PICC will provide its facility, and TPB will give institutional backing and financial support.

From my end, I have convinced my colleagues in ADFIAP to help me do the





Peralta is an active participant at his association events and gatherings of business events industry peers such as IT&CM Asia Pacific (third photo from left)

paperwork and shell out seed money from their own pockets for the registration fee with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of a non-profit association modelled out of the ASAE.

Interestingly, after at least 40 suggested names, the SEC finally accepted the name of the association as, the Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives. We finally registered as such on October 23, 2013.

It's the first association of associations in the Philippines. Where is it now?

On November 19 to 20, 2013, ADFIAP, PICC and TPB held the first Association Executives Summit at PICC. It was attended by over 200 participants from the association community here in the Philippines. On the second day, I facilitated a town hall meeting and announced the existence of the PCAAE. Those attending the Summit agreed to be constituted as the founding members of PCAAE.

On January 30 a year later, PCAAE held its first general council of members meeting (GCMM) and started its programmes in earnest. At the second GCMM, having found out that most associations in the country are entirely run by volunteers (board and management) and the ASAE model of having a volunteer board and paid professional management staff are less than expected, PCAAE changed its name to the Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives (still having the same acronym, PCAAE) to serve the interests of both the associations and the professionals that work in associations.

You didn't stop with PCAAE. You also brought the concept to Asia.

At first, my initial thought, because of my experience in ADFIAP and my contacts with ASAE, was to form an Asia-Pacific federation of association of associations. Because of its pan Asia-

Pacific nature, it turned out to be more challenging than I expected so I settled for organising first a national association in PCAAE.

At about this time, ASAE is also making inroads in Asia and planning to organise its Great Ideas Conference, which is held successfully in the US. Because of my long-standing membership in ASAE and having met its global development officer, Greta Kotler, who was tasked to organise the event in Hong Kong, I was invited to be a member of the ASAE advisory task force to provide content idea for the conference.

“WHILE ASSOCIATIONS ARE NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS, THEY ARE CERTAINLY NOT-FOR-LOSS ORGANISATIONS EITHER. ENOUGH FINANCIAL RESERVES ARE NEEDED TO SUSTAIN AN ASSOCIATION.”

There I met, among others, fellow task force members, John Peacock, CEO of Associations Forum (AF) in Australia, Glynn Cho who was at that time organising the Korean Society of Association Executives (KSAE), and Noor Ahmad Hamid, regional director for Asia-Pacific of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

Having known that there are already national associations of associations in Australia and Korea, I conceptualised the setting up of an Asia-Pacific federation.

On March 24, 2015 in Hong Kong, at the sidelines of the Great Ideas Conference, members of the ASAE task force plus other invitees favourably endorsed the forming of the Asia-Pacific Federation

of Association Organizations (APFAO) with the signing of the Hong Kong Charter with four APFAO founding members, namely, AF, KSAE, PCAAE and Australasian Society of Association Executives.

That's a big leap.

I always believed that as an association executive, you need to be global in mind, heart and skill-sets. By going international, you meet many of your peers, learn more things, get and create great ideas, and be innovative in your offerings. One cannot stay local for long. There are many opportunities beyond your local boundaries.

PCAAE's engagement with APFAO was relatively straightforward since I have already built credibility and rapport with association peers over the years. In the association world, relationship is a valued asset and brings many benefits for the long-term.

And you did it within a short period.

It may seem relatively easy and in a short span of time, but behind this journey are like-minded people and supporting partners ready to help out.

I'm also blessed with colleagues in ADFIAP who are dedicated, passionate and selfless to help out a noble mission of advancing the association management profession and making associations well-governed and sustainable.

I share this with many people and institutions close to me, have met, and worked with. There's my supportive family which at first I had difficulty explaining my job to as an association man.

Then there's ADFIAP which provided me the hands-on experience of managing an association, and the ASAE which gave me the toolkit to do it well.

And there's the PCAAE which I founded as a way of giving back to a profession I dearly love.

Down different tracks

Octavio B Peralta is a mechanical engineer by education but an association man at heart. Interestingly, *The Association Man* is the name of his weekly column in a local daily.

After graduating from the Mapua Institute of Technology in 1974 and passing the licensure examination a year later, he worked for two years as a quality engineer and then production engineer at Delta Motor Corp.

He spent 15 years at the Development Bank of the Philippines in various capacities, a practicing development banker to training development bankers. He also had a stint in Washington, D.C. as a training officer of a learning institution run by retired World Bank officers.

Peralta became ADFIAP secretary general in 2005, a position he still holds today.

At age 67 this year, Peralta belongs to a small but close-knit family. He is married to Elylonia Villaroman-Peralta, a licensed real estate broker. Their only child Carlo, 37 years old, is an entrepreneur.



Your colleagues said you are always prompt, replies emails and phone calls within the day, well-attired for the occasion and have a good memory even for difficult names like Indonesian ones which helps in dealing with people.

I grew up with my grandmother who nurtured me with the discipline of a leader. I am blessed, too, to have good faculties that put me in the top of my class from grade school to high school. My collegiate record was remarkable, too.

I also have a knack for seeing opportunities presented before me before others could see them, if at all.

With these attributes, I have developed a management style which I refer to as an acronym, CEO. C for consensus-builder; E for engaging with people; O for open to ideas from others.

I am a leader that tolerate failures and even encourages them because for me, failures present opportunities to succeed in the end. In the office, I maintain an open-door policy so everyone is welcome to see me in my workplace at any time. I also prefer to be called on with my first name, Bobby.

What's the setup between ADFIAP and PCAAE? To what extent is the support of ADFIAP as the PCAAE secretariat?

I'm a volunteer leader of the PCAAE but we now have a paid professional staff to run its day-to-day operations. I am supported by a 15-person Board representing different non-profit member-associations and two from the private sector to get a balanced perspective of running PCAAE.

We walk the talk with our advocacy, a volunteer Board and a professional management team, working together but with clearly defined roles which delineated functions for the interest of our members.

The Board provides strategic direction, oversight, policymaking and fundraising campaigns. The management team operates the secretariat on a daily basis.

I believe that associations need to be run like a business enterprise, with a Board and management team working in tandem and with clearly delineated tasks as above-mentioned. While associations are not-for-profit organisations, they are certainly not-for-loss organisations either. Enough financial reserves are needed to sustain an association.

"THE IMPACT I WISH TO SEE FOR MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY IS CONTINUING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH COLLABORATION."

What's next now that APFAO is operational?

APFAO is evolving. From an informal network when it started in 2015, APFAO is now slowly moving to formalise its organisation and structure by having its constitution and office bearers. This was decided by the general assembly of members who met in Singapore on October 29, 2018 at the sidelines of ASAE's Association Leadership Forum held there.

There is also more collaboration among APFAO members in terms of programming and information exchanges. APFAO and ASAE, which supported the founding of APFAO, are in constant touch to determine how best to maximise their relationship going forward.

What are the broader issues impacting Asian associations and association executives?

APFAO's vision is to be the hub of

excellence in association leadership. The biggest challenge is the fact that the "children" (being the member national associations of associations) had come first before the "mother" (being APFAO).

While national members have their hands full in their own respective countries, will they still have the time and energy to do more and beyond their borders?

I believe, however, that there is scope for cooperation and collaboration among national associations in terms of knowledge exchanges for the betterment of their respective members.

PCAAE's vision is for a Philippines where associations and other member-serving organisations are professionally governed and managed. The biggest challenge is how to engage and involve associations in PCAAE where most are volunteer-governed and managed. We find there is not much compulsion for these associations to learn more about association management and governance which are sciences in themselves and which PCAAE advocates for.

Most of these associations believe that their organisations can be sustainable despite their short-term view and ad-hocism. We think that the solution to this challenge is for the Professional Regulation Commission, the government agency tasked with registering professionals, to make the association executive or manager to be recognised as a full-fledged and licensed profession like real estate brokers, for example, and a career like engineers, nurses, etc.

The impact I wish to see for my contribution to the association community is continuing knowledge through collaboration. Perhaps, in more concrete terms is as much as possible a harmonised global professional training standard and curriculum so association executives in one country can work in another with little contextual aspects to add such as legal and cultural dimensions.

Universally accessible centres



As congresses move to involve more members of the community, venues that host these gatherings must also be welcoming for people with varying levels of physical and sensorial abilities. *TTGassociations* checks out how some Asian convention centres measure up on universal accessibility

Coex, Seoul, South Korea

Coex convention and exhibition centre caters to wheelchair users and visitors with reduced mobility. All conference spaces, including the auditorium, are wheelchair-accessible. Should a visitor require a wheelchair on site, free rentals are provided at the Coex Safety Centre. For event attendees who must be accompanied by a support person, Coex allows free admission for the support person as well. Service animals are allowed in the centre with advanced approval.

Convenience is extended to Starfield Coex Mall, beneath the centre, where free wheelchair rental is offered. The centre is also connected to the InterContinental Seoul, which has an inventory of four accessible guestrooms. These rooms are equipped with a variety of services for disabled guests, including Braille service, a ramp entrance as well as widened aisles, pathways and doors.

More to come: Both Coex and Starfield Coex Mall are working to increase the number of restrooms for people with disabilities.



Coex convention and exhibition centre offers free event admission to support people and allows service animals on-site

ICC Sydney, Australia

ICC Sydney offers a highly tailored approach when it comes to meeting required support for delegates with special needs. This can be accommodated through culinary service, room setups or venue access.

For example, ICC Sydney hosted an event in 2018 with delegates who experienced sensitivities towards light and sound. To ensure these delegates had a safe space to take time out as they needed, quiet and dim rooms were set up for the event.

The centre had also provided lower dining tables for another event where there were a high number of guests in wheelchairs. This meant all delegates were able to come together for meal breaks, regardless of their mobility requirements.

Other accessibility features at ICC Sydney include wheelchair seating with adjacent carer seats in all theatre venues, lowered counters at key retail and service points, and wheelchair-accessible baby change facilities.

IMPACT Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok, Thailand

The IMPACT Muang Thong Thani event complex takes into consideration event attendees of varying accessibility needs.

Basic accessibility features at the venue includes demarcated drop off/pick up zones in front of all buildings for disabled persons, demarcated parking lots for disabled persons, elevators for handicapped and disabled with braille buttons, and disabled/handicapped toilets with emergency alarms.

For the convenience of delegates with mobility issues, IMPACT offers wheelchairs for use.

As well, to facilitate movement between buildings, inter-connecting indoor access bridges with travelers (also known as moving walkways) have been installed.

Beyond provisions for physically-challenged event attendees and venue visitors, IMPACT also offers breastfeeding rooms and baby diaper changing rooms – a boon for working mothers. Events held at IMPACT are supported by on-site medical/first aid centres as well as ambulances on standby.

More to come: According to IMPACT's spokesperson, the venue is looking to grow its universal accessibility features to include tactile paving on all footpaths and stairs to assist the visually impaired, and assist bars in all toilets.



ICC Sydney has experience catering to events attended by delegates with special needs

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Malaysia

The purpose-built Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre boasts an OSHAS 18001:2007 certification – meaning the venue's path of travel is obstruction free – and was accorded the Kuala Lumpur Mayor Universal Access Award 2013, which acknowledges the facility's building design as being accessible and user-friendly for all.

Some of the centre's key universal accessibility features include automatic doors and shallow grade ramps to provide direct access from road level at all its entrances; elevators which are fitted with low-level Braille numeral floor buttons, aural and visual indicators and wide-door access; double-leaf doors to facilitate wheelchair entry in all function rooms; wheelchair platform lifts and designated chairs that can be removed to accommodate wheelchairs in the plenary theatre and plenary hall; 12 fully-fitted unisex dedicated wheelchair accessible restrooms located adjacent to the public restrooms on every level; and parking bays for physically-challenged guests are available adjacent to the parking level lift landings.

The centre also welcomes all guide and assistance dogs.



Above: Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is certified obstruction-free and is wheelchair-friendly
Below: Reserved parking bays are available at most convention centres



Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia

Delegates with hearing needs are specially catered for at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) with hearing assist technology, where visitors can borrow a lanyard-style infrared receiver that works directly with hearing aids fitted with a T switch, or alternatively fitted with standard headphones.

Most of the meeting rooms within the centre are equipped with this system and visitors simply pre-book a receiver by contacting customer service. Event organisers can also work with MCEC's Technology Planners to address attendee requirements, which enables the units to be pre-programmed prior to guests arriving on-site.

For delegates with sight needs, Braille is provided on all room door signage and fixed directional signage throughout the venue.

MCEC is guide dog friendly and welcomes any registered assistance dogs into all areas of the building. The centre has also worked with Guide Dogs Victoria to host pop-up sensory experience workshops that partly aims to raise awareness for the vision-impaired.

Pacifico Yokohama, Japan

Pacifico Yokohama, the key convention centre of Yokohama city, is built to cater to the needs of visitors with physical and mental disabilities. Facilities such as wheelchair ramps, elevators for the physically-challenged, writing boards at information booths for the hard of hearing, and vending machines for people in wheelchairs are available.

The centre also offers universal restrooms that are designed for ostomates, with sheets to help adults change their clothes if necessary.

Besides these hardware, Pacifico Yokohama invests heavily in ensuring that its staff are aware of the challenges that such guests face and the ways in which they can make their visit more straightforward.

Skills seminars are held regularly to educate staff on the hurdles that physically-and mentally-challenged guests might face, ways in which they can communicate with people with specific difficulties and needs, and – more importantly – the support and assistance they can provide in the event of a natural disaster.

The seminars provide instruction on aiding people in wheelchairs, such as how to carry a person in a wheelchair down stairs in the event of a disaster, as well as the different types of mental disabilities that they might encounter and how to communicate and help those people.

These educated staff are assigned to provide onsite help during universal events.

As well, Pacifico Yokohama, which regularly hosts medical-related conferences, including the BioJapan 2019/Regenerative Medicine Japan 2019 in October and the annual meetings of both the Japan Society of Respiratory Care and the Japanese Cancer Association next year, frequently updates its website with information for physically- and mentally-challenged visitors.

More to come: Universal restrooms have been incorporated into the design of the adjacent Pacifico Yokohama North wing, which is scheduled to open in early 2020.



Left and above: Universal toilet and vending machines are available at Pacifico Yokohama



Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore

The integrated resort on Sentosa island provides a parking area reserved for visitors with disability.

Lots are accessible to all vehicles with a Disabled Parking Permit. All restrooms within the complex have wheelchair-accessible facilities, and the first aid facilities on site are staffed with nurses and professional paramedics.

For association events with room for some experiential fun, Resorts World Sentosa offers complimentary Disabled Divers International introductory courses to eligible participants. It is the first and only organisation in Singapore accredited by Disabled Divers International to conduct recreational dives for the disabled.

Furthermore, event attendees who have the chance to visit Universal Studios Singapore will find a variety of friendly services for visitors with disabilities. These include an Assistive Listening signal, access for service animals in most locations of the park, and portable kennels for service animals.

Taipei International Convention Centre, Taiwan

Taipei International Convention Centre (TICC) is fitted with facilities for attendees with ambulatory needs, such as accessible toilets, wheelchair ramps, and barrier-free elevators with Braille

buttons and voice prompts.

For events requiring special arrangements, TICC steps up to the plate to provide a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all attendees. An example was the 19th Retina International World Congress in July 2016, which was attended by some 800 medical professionals and scholars, as well as patients and their families – 70 per cent of whom were visually-impaired and of which nearly 200 were blind.

For the congress, experts were invited to instruct staff members on methods to guide visually-disabled people. Almost 100 volunteers were mobilised to guide attendees at the stairways, elevators and restrooms inside and outside the meeting venue.

Guide dogs and trainers were on hand for demonstrations. Aisles in the conference and dining rooms were widened for visually-disabled people, guide dogs, and escorts. Finally, an artificial outdoor turf area was built to provide a “toilet space” for the guide dogs.

SMX Convention Center Manila, Philippines

SMX Convention Center Manila offers language interpreters for event participants who are deaf mute. A Safety and Emergency Procedure audio-visual presentation is provided before every event that caters to both visual and hearing impaired.

Apart from a company nurse and medical clinic, SMX Manila is also equipped with wheelchairs, making it the venue of choice since 2011 for the Philippine Veterans Bank events which are attended mostly by elderly World War II veterans, and since 2016 by Happy Walk for Down Syndrome, the biggest annual awareness gathering in the country.

SMX Manila is designed as a PWD

(people with disability)-friendly building with designated parking spaces, ramps from the basement parking to the bridgways connecting to the hotel and shopping mall, mechanical wheelchair inclinator, passenger elevator with Braille buttons, and designated restrooms with safety handrails and proper height for the water closet, urinal and lavatory per United Nations standards.

As well, in consideration of delegates with mobility challenges, the centre’s cafe is set near the ground floor entrance and a wheelchair lift.

For guest safety, emergency sounders and blinkers are strategically located at all public areas and venue spaces.

Suntec Singapore

Suntec Singapore is equipped for events welcoming attendees with physical disabilities and medical needs. It is fitted with step-free drop-off points, centrally located escalators, first aid boxes as well as wheelchair-accessible toilets and nursing room facilities.

Attendees with registered assistance animals can roam the venue with ease of mind as registered support animals are allowed in all areas of the convention centre.

Additionally, should the need for medical aid arise, Suntec Singapore provides frontline staff trained to render first aid.

Below: People with mobility challenges can meet barrier-free in most convention centres in major Asia-Pacific cities



Below from left: Taipei International Convention Centre and SMX Convention Center Manila



Stronger attraction points

Macau's unique blend of old and new, and improved access from Hong Kong and China, are coming together to attract meeting planners, writes **Prudence Lui**



Nick Poon/Shutterstock

Improved access from China and Hong Kong, through the new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, makes Macau a potential meeting hub for professionals from the region

Macau's compactness but with enormous capacity within the integrated resorts for events make her one of the few destinations in Asia that can support large-scale gatherings.

And her popularity among association meeting planners is showing through ICCA's latest ranking of top meetings destinations. Macau doubled the number of hosted international association meetings from 15 in 2009 to 39 in 2018. Last year, Macao Statistics and Census Bureau recorded 1,427 events, with association meetings accounting for 29.9 per cent (427 events) of them all, five per cent more than in 2017.

Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) said the growth was due to various reasons such as the government strategy of "giving priority to conventions" and the diversification of the local tourism sector into non-gaming specialisation.

According to the IPIM spokesperson, Macau as a destination offers meetings delegates an attractive contrast of the old and new.

"Besides the old and traditional Macau, visitors can also spend time at the integrated resorts where there are shows, concerts, shopping, dining and

themed activities," said the spokesperson.

Current recreational draws that would bring fun into any association meeting programme include the Golden Reel, a figure-8 ferris wheel at Studio City Macau; *The House of Dancing Water* show at City of Dreams, Macau; and Skytop Wave Pool at Galaxy Macau.

As well, Macau's history as a former Portuguese colony with Chinese roots allow foreign delegates to experience the destination by taste. The unique Macanese cuisine is a fusion of Eastern and Western flavours, and many of the most authentic dining experiences can be found in the villages of Taipa and Coloane.

To make these unique experiences more easily accessible to association meeting planners, IPIM and industry partners have co-created a series of options that include almond cake-making workshop, calligraphy tutorial, archery on the beach, and visits to local night markets.

But beyond these softer – but no less critical – destination appeal, Macau's attractiveness as a host city has been elevated with the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. The new bridge brings the three areas closer,

reducing the Macau-Hong Kong commute to just 30 minutes and allowing Macau to be the hub where businesses and professional associations can easily come together for meetings and conventions.

Macau's new strengths as a meetings city will be put on show when it hosts the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry's (UFI) annual Asia Pacific Conference in March 2020. The event is expected to draw more than 300 exhibition leaders from all over the world.



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Meeting delegates can get to know Macau through street food; Rua do Cunha food street pictured

{ Need to know }

1 New destination branding

Meeting planners who have chosen Macau for their next congress will benefit from IPIM's new MEET@Macao destination branding campaign that features a multi-layer communication strategy to convey the compact city's strengths for serious events.

2 Two cities in one

Macau Peninsula and Cotai Strip are two different sides of Macau, and both come together to present a unique destination experience for pre/post-conference programmes. Culture lovers and foodies will find Macau Peninsula a haven to discover, while the

more adventurous ones and fun seekers will appreciate the Cotai side where activity-filled integrated resorts are thriving.

3 More green meetings options

Some 19 hotels have been recognised by the Macau Green Hotel Awards for having demonstrated a major improvement in energy and water efficiency, recycling efforts, waste reduction, noise and light pollution management as well as other environmental protection measures. Associations with strict green vendor guidelines will be pleased to know they now have more venue options in Macau.

{ Pre/Post }



Social additions on the sea

The Macau Cruise, operated by Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management (Macau), offers a customisable, 45-minute sea journey between Taipa and Coloane Ferry Terminal. It cruises past Macau landmarks such as A-Ma Temple, Guia Fortress, Penha Hill, Macau Tower, Amizade Bridge, and Kun Iam Statue.

Cruise ships *Taipa I* and *Coloane I* depart daily, and can each accommodate 43 passengers. With onboard amenities such as free Wi-Fi, TV and audio-visual system and offering a range of entertainment such as fireworks and eco tours, the Macau Cruise makes a good option for pre/post-meeting social events. Private charters are available.

Studio City dangles more fun lures

Two new entertainment attractions are coming to Studio City Macau. The Flip-Out, operated by a leading trampoline park operator with 78 arenas worldwide, will be Macau's first indoor trampoline centre. The Legend Heroes Park will be the city's first virtual reality theme park which combines cutting-edge virtual and augmented reality technology such as holograms, motion tracking and projection mapping. Both can be worked into the lighter side of a meetings programme.



Let's head backstage

Seen *The House of Dancing Water* at the City of Dreams integrated resort and loved it? Now, private groups can head backstage to explore the elaborate water show production and get a taste of what it is like to be a performer. Participants will also have a chance to meet show artists and cast their eyes on some of the iconic props.



Eat your way through Macau

For congress attendees looking to extend their stay in Macau on their own, consider signing up for a three-hour walking food tour offered by Klook. Conducted in English, Chinese and Cantonese, the tour rounds up the best of Macau's delicacies in beautiful locations only a local would know. Good for four to six people per tour, the experience promises maximum interaction with the tour guide.



Get jamming

Did you know the ukulele was from Portugal, brought by the Portuguese migrating to Hawaii? Appreciate and learn to play the instrument in Macau, a former Portuguese colony, under the guidance of local artists.

Participants may design their ukulele by painting on patterns of Azulejo – Portuguese tileworks that have found their way into Macanese architecture.

Offered by Coforte Organisation Development, this is suitable for groups of between 10 and 200 people.

So close, so good

For associations looking to avoid big city prices for their events, Selangor – with its cheaper meeting and entertainment options but sitting close to Kuala Lumpur – may just be the answer. By **S Puvaneswary**

As event budgets get depressed in the tough global economic climate, cheaper alternatives to capital city destinations gain greater attention among cautious meeting planners.

Selangor state, where Malaysian capital city Kuala Lumpur resides, is one such destination that has seen a rise in popularity for corporate meetings and association events. It makes a clever alternative to Kuala Lumpur, as it is easily accessible from the city centre and international airport, has plenty of accommodation, meeting venues and pre/post-meeting tour options but none of the big city rates.

Arokia Das Anthony, director, Luxury Tours Malaysia, who has seen many national associations leaning towards meetings in Selangor, told *TTGassociations*: “Many national association headquarters

or affiliated offices are located in (Kuala Lumpur). Due to budget cuts resulting in cost saving measures, organisers are looking for cheaper venues. Selangor is a natural choice because it is close by, there is less traffic which makes it easier to get around, and there are many choices for offsite dining options”.

Jai Kishan, general manager at New World Petaling Jaya Hotel, sees 2019 as a challenging year for association meetings. He said many domestic and international associations have reduced their event budgets, and some have “come back to us to renegotiate” for lower prices or additional value adds.

“Some clients have also scaled down their event sizes or cancelled bookings in favour of cheaper venues,” added Jai.

“To increase our market share of association events, we are responding with exclusive promotional packages,

upgrades, relaxed credit terms, value additions of audio-visual equipment, LED screens and setups for repetitive association meetings,” he added.

Flexibility is also the order of the day for Sheraton Petaling Jaya Hotel, according to Rachel Lim, director of sales centre. The hotel is more open to customising arrangements to event needs and to include value adds to meeting packages in order to get clients to bite.

“Also, as part of the Marriott International group of hotels, we promote the Triple Perks programme for meetings and events which helps organisers maximise their budget with discounts on rooms and room upgrades, among others,” added Lim.

Sheraton Petaling Jaya Hotel has a strong base of repeat association clients mainly because the sales team has developed a close rapport with conference organisers and understand their needs.

Selangor’s growing popularity for meetings is also a result of a supportive tourism office.

Tourism Selangor grants association meetings with at least 100 confirmed delegates partial sponsorship of a gala dinner and cultural show and provision



Setia City Convention Centre has successes in attracting national and regional association meetings



Tourism Selangor



From left: The small coastal town of Sekinchan is home to paddy fields and laid-back tourist draws; Courtyard by Marriott Setia Alam is opening in 4Q2020

of a one-day sight-seeing tour.

Uzaidi Udanis, president, Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association (MITA), shared that Tourism Selangor is encouraging business and association events in the state by being a one-stop centre to help facilitate licensing and any assistance that organisers may need.

MITA benefitted from Tourism Selangor's efforts when it organised its inaugural MITA Tourism Carnival at the

Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Serdang (MAEPS) in March.

"The events team at MAEPS worked closely with Tourism Selangor which helped to facilitate licensing of the event, including getting a license to hold concerts during the three days," he explained.

The tourism carnival included a B2C travel exhibition in a hall, another exhibition featuring 200 small- and medium-sized enterprises selling food and local products outside the hall, and concerts featuring local artistes over the three days. In all, the carnival attracted more than 100,000 visitors.

Uzaidi shared that MAEPS was chosen as a venue because of its large capacity. He said: "Initially we thought of hold-

ing it in Kuala Lumpur but we couldn't find a venue large enough. And if it was in the city, we would have had to run around to get licensing from different government departments."

Setia City Convention Centre has also seen success in promoting the venue as a smart alternative to the capital city for national and regional association gatherings.

Head, convention centre, Francis Teo, said his centre's close proximity to nature, cultural and historical attractions in Klang, Kuala Selangor and Sekinchan, while at the same time, being only 40 minutes' drive to Kuala Lumpur, makes it ideal for off-site dinners as well as pre/post tours in both the capital city and in Selangor.

Setia City Convention Centre is also leveraging its close proximity to the National Institutes of Health Malaysia at Setia Alam City to attract medical related meetings.

And the venue is hungry for more. Teo said: "While Setia City Convention Centre has a strong base of domestic meetings, exhibitions and events, we hope to attract more business events and association meetings from the Asia-Pacific region in the coming years."

The centre's ambitions will be easier to accomplish as two new hotels will open nearby soon, providing meeting planners greater accommodation options.

Wyndham Acmar Klang is scheduled to open in 3Q2019 with 488 keys while Courtyard by Marriott Setia Alam is scheduled to open in 4Q2020 with 425 keys. Courtyard by Marriott Setia Alam is adjacent to Setia City Convention Centre while Wyndham Acmar Klang is a mere 15 minutes' drive.



"Initially we thought of holding (our MITA Tourism Carnival) in Kuala Lumpur but we couldn't find a venue large enough. And if it was in the city, we would have had to run around to get licensing from different government departments."

Uzaidi Udanis
President,
Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association



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

{ Pre/Post }

Work in a resort getaway

With the congress done and dusted, delegates looking for a leisure extension can consider Sunway Lagoon Theme Park and Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall – Selangor's oldest and largest theme park with over 90 attractions spread across 88 acres.

Have fun across six adventure zones, including Asia's first Nickelodeon themed land. Admission ticket includes entry to all parks, including all rides, activities and attractions.

The theme park is also within walking distance to Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall, which has more than 1,000 retail outlets, an ice-skating rink, a bowling centre and a cinema complex.

One can easily spend a full day at the complete Sunway complex.



Go shopping for outlet goodies

Not just anywhere, but at Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang, the only factory outlet in Selangor and conveniently located near Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Branded products come with discounts of 30 to 70 per cent.

Facilities at Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang cater well to travellers hoping to do one last retail run before leaving Malaysia. Free baggage storage service is offered at the mall along with a flight check-in centre where shoppers can obtain their boarding pass. There is also a flight information display system to ensure travellers do not miss their flight out.



Peer into the Sky Mirror

Sky Mirror on the Straits of Melaka is a natural attraction that was once the best kept secret known only to the fishing community of Kuala Selangor. However, the seabed which appears above water only during low tide is now drawing curious tourists since its main jetty was opened in 2017.

At low tide, Sky Mirror exposes a dark coloured sandbar as large as 50 football fields. It takes about 30 minutes to walk from one end to the other. The best days to take photographs at Sky Mirror is on the first and 15th of the lunar month, as well as four days before and after these dates, when the water is still and reflection is clear.



Say hello to the animals

The National Zoo sits on 110 acres of land in Hulu Kelang. It is the largest zoo in Malaysia in terms of land space and resident animal species – more than 5,000 animals from more than 450 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

With advance notice, guided tours can also be arranged for individuals and groups.

The zoo is open daily, from 09.00 to 17.00.

Are you ready for hard knocks?

Malaysia is renowned for its Royal Selangor pewter. The Royal Selangor Visitor Centre provides visitors with an interactive learning experience on how products are made. Visitors can watch craftsmen at work and try their hand at designing their own pewter mugs at the School of Hard Knocks.

Royal Selangor Visitor Centre is open daily from 09.00 to 17.00.



Exceeding excellence

Arinex is challenged to outdo itself and deliver an awards evening for NAWIC that will outperform the successful 2017 edition it created, writes **Adelaine Ng**

Event brief

The National Association for Women in Construction (NAWIC) Awards for Excellence takes place annually to acknowledge and celebrate female leaders in the construction field. As part of the event, the awards evening raises money to directly support and empower women in the industry. Arinex was tasked to get to the heart of the award's objectives and raise the bar on what was already a successful previous year, which was also organised by Arinex.

Challenges

For Arinex, working with a long-standing client to plan a captivating awards function with seamless delivery required strong communication to ensure all objectives were met, as well as new ideas to turn the client's ideas into creative concepts that support the awards' overall mission and to leave a lasting impression on attendees.

Going into their seventh year and following a very successful 2017 event, Arinex's Social Programs and Corporate Events team had unwittingly set themselves a high bar. The previous year's awards had reached the highest ever guest numbers with about 900 participants, featured prominent Australian journalist Lee Lin Chin as emcee and achieved record fundraising.

Solutions

The event was moved to the International Convention Centre Sydney, a new and larger venue to allow more guests to experience the Awards for Excellence.

"After (the previous) year's attendance, we believed we'd outgrow that venue for 2018," said Arinex project manager Leonie Tonge-Ferris.

"Not only does ICC Sydney cater for larger guest numbers, but having a brand new venue enabled us to continue surprising and delighting the guests."

A new theme was also created to give the event a distinctive flavour, which was revealed as Reflection, to mirror innovation in digital solutions including creative design and the latest audio-visual elements.

For entertainment, Arinex kept the celebrity names coming, including a surprise performance by X-Factor winner and Eurovision finalist Dami Im before dancing the night away to live party band Dirty Cash. TV journalist Jessica Rowe was emcee for the night.

To create a more intimate atmosphere for such a large group and space, a 360-degree stage was also set up.

"The ICC Sydney ballroom doesn't have a built-in stage," said Tonge-Ferris. "So we needed to come up with a solution to give the high calibre of talent the platform they deserved.



Event

National Association for Women in Construction Awards of Excellence

Organiser
Arinex

Venue
ICC Sydney

Date
August 23, 2018

Number of participants
1,100



Fundraising similarly increased 44 per cent on the previous year from the auction and raffle, which will directly impact NAWIC's mission to empower women in the industry through investment into an International Women's Day scholarship and other worthy causes.

Key takeaways

A good long-standing relationship between Arinex and NAWIC made it possible to have a deep level of understanding of the organisation's objectives and resulted in a strong, collaborative relationship. Also, the customised layout allowed more guests to experience a front-row seat and allowed the emcee and entertainment better access to the audience, found Taleah Bird, awards committee chair of NAWIC NSW Awards.

We came up with the idea to custom-build a central stage to capture the high energy and keep guests engaged throughout the night."

To support NAWIC's overall event objectives, Arinex utilised long-standing supplier partner relationships to organise donations and prizes such as luxe hotel stays, gourmet gifts and bespoke holiday experiences. To streamline and encourage monetary donations, the team increased the tech equipment on the night, which enabled NAWIC to achieve record-breaking fundraising.

As a result, the 2018 Awards welcomed the largest ever audience of over 1,100 guests.

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