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## Korea drives new MICE group

**By Dannon Har**

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

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

KMA is signing this afternoon an

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



**Kim: step-by-step approach**

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

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

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

she said.

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

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

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

## Boosts to twin Taiwan with Japan, Korea

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## An opening that packs a punch

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

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

## HCVB charts next 5 years' takings

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Khan: track record and hungry for more**

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

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

## Monaco nets ASEAN MICE

**By Mimi Hudoyo**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Baduffle: double the contribution**

# ASEAN gets it right with exhibitions

By Dannon Har

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

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

or an undersupply.

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

“(China) has definitely overbuilt in the past decade. It has exhibition centres that are absolutely massive such as the 300,000m<sup>2</sup> Kunming Dianchi International Convention & Exhibition Center and the 400,000m<sup>2</sup> National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai. China has multiple venues (whose space is) equal or more than the total capacity available in Japan,” said Cochrane.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

**Mark Cochrane**  
Regional manager Asia/Pacific, UFI

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## Direct to second wave cities

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

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

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

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

he said.

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

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

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

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

### { In brief }

#### Christchurch outbids New York for structural engineering congress

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

#### Agricultural economists to be out in the sun

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

#### Bid for travel packages at SITE's Auction 2.0

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

