

AIPC BRINGS ASIA INTO FOCUS

THE ANNUAL AIPC CONFERENCE, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN SINGAPORE, JUNE 30 TO JULY 2, BROUGHT ASIA INTO SHARP FOCUS FOR DELEGATES FROM 53 COUNTRIES. ROB NICHOLAS REPORTS

The annual AIPC Conference this year had particular significance, being the 50th edition of the event and attracting principals from leading convention and exhibition centres from all over the world.

meetme was privileged to have been hosted at the event, which took place this year in Singapore, providing the chance to not only meet the venue movers and shakers, but also to witness the superb capabilities and attractions of the host destination.

The conference was held at Suntec Convention Centre in Suntec City - a dream destination for a meeting planner within easy access of 5,200 hotel rooms (most within walking distance), shopping malls and just a short distance from main attractions such as Raffles Hotel and Orchard Road.

While the internal workings of the association and the interactions between participants provided a fascinating insight to the challenges and opportunities presented by conference and exhibition centres worldwide, it was the addresses from keynote speakers and subsequent discourse among members that really stood out for most attendees at the conference.

AIPC pulled out all the stops to attract entrepreneurial and academic thought leaders providing stimulation to all participants that eradicated the effects of tiredness on the first day, coming on the back of a Euro 2008 defeat by Germany - a particular blow to AIPC president Edgar Hirt, but of course a boost to the Spanish contingent.

Any drooping eye-lids were peeled to full attention with a dramatic conference opener from Suntec's resident dragon dancers as the drum beats and tambourine shakes equalled the efficacy of the caffeine available at the hall's entrance, and set the destination tone for the event.

Kishore Mahbubani, dean and professor at the National University of Singapore, provided some local relevance of the intellectual variety, referencing the progress of the host destination while putting the development of the wider Asian economy into perspective.

As the author of 'The New Asian Hemisphere: the irresistible shift of global power to the East', Mahbubani was described by The Economist



AIPC President Edgar Hirt

as "an Asian Toynbee, preoccupied with the rise and fall of civilizations". His session was met with enraptured attention as he explained how Asia is on target to regain its status as the premier world economy.

Mahbubani's address was structured on the seven key pillars of western wisdom and how the Asian economy has moved to embrace them even more vigorously than the rest of the world.

His message was clear and the facts were revealing - 55 percent of the world's population is in Asia, and after having the unenviable claim of being the stage for the three biggest wars since World War II a culture of peace is now prevalent, allowing growth at an unprecedented rate.

Mahbubani referenced China's meteoric growth as being akin to the fattest boy in class winning the 100 metres; the fact that most PhDs in America are awarded to Asians; and he pointed to a prevailing meritocracy and talent emerging throughout the Asian class systems - likening Brazil's status as a soccer superpower yet being an economic underachiever to the emergence of educational achievers and business leaders from throughout the less privileged areas of Asian society.

No less fascinating was Ho Kwon Ping, executive chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, who delivered a powerful presentation that delivered valuable insight into the economic and social development of Asia, along with considerations of how this may impact the working environment of the convention centre industry.

A third keynote speaker provided bankable knowledge to every attendee. James H. Gilmore is author of 'The Experience Economy and Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want' and followed the first two keynote speakers with an address that covered the kind of experiences our businesses will need to deliver in the future.

Speakers also provided invaluable commentary arising from their own experience of doing business in Asia, with Paul Kennedy particularly standing out with stark observations that rang true for all attendees.

Kennedy rattled through some of the challenges of doing business in specific Asian economies including India, China and the Gulf. Surprisingly, Kennedy was the first to group the Gulf with the rest of Asia despite its status as being "the growing economic power of Asia" and described the region as embracing the seven pillars of western wisdom (referencing Mahbubani's earlier address) with equal verve to the rest of Asia.

An amusing anecdote was given from Reed Travel Exhibitions' experiences of doing business in China at the CIBTM, when one standholder basing their literature requirement on attendance at other travel trade exhibitions, ran out of brochures 21 minutes after opening. "The thirst for information in China is unquenchable," Kennedy remarked.



AIPC developments

Announced at the conference was this year's eagerly anticipated AIPC Apex Award winner.

Taking the accolade for the second time was the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre - the first time a centre has won the laurels twice. Runners-up were the Cairns Convention Centre and the Brisbane Convention Centre, both of Australia, with particular praise going towards their marketing expertise and positioning.

New developments were also announced in three key AIPC programmes; the AIPC Quality Standards programme, which is now available for all members to qualify for; the AIPC Academy, which is entering its third year with a proposal to move to incorporate a second year programme, and the AIPC Sales and Marketing Summit, which is spawning an operations and event management counterpart.

A Board election resulted in the addition of Clare Amsel of Athens, Greece to existing Board members President Edgar Hirt of Hamburg, Germany; Vice President Geoff Donaghy of Cairns, Australia; Treasurer Edgar Gnanou of Paris, France; Steve Piper of Brighton, UK; Marisa Marin of Bilbao, Spain and Paul Saint-Jacques of Montreal, Canada.

Host to the event

Suntec Convention Centre was the venue for the event with hotel accommodation supported by Pan Pacific (official host hotel) and the Mandarin Oriental.

Self-promoted as 'Asia's Convention City' Suntec forms a unique, self-contained and fully integrated convention city, adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD), and only 20 minutes from Changi International Airport.



Suntec Singapore offers direct access to 100,000 square metres of meeting space, 5,200 hotel rooms, 1,000 shops, 300 restaurants and a world-class performing arts centre.

Facilities are interconnected and easily accessible via air-conditioned tunnels and covered walkways.

Suntec Singapore is the third year of an alliance with Pan Pacific Hotel, Mandarin Oriental, Marina Mandarin, The Ritz-Carlton Millenia, Conrad Centennial, Pacific World, Singapore Airlines and Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB) to bring the best stakeholders in Singapore's travel and tourism industry together to provide the very best experiences, values and services to visiting groups.

Mandarin Oriental

meetme was hosted by Mandarin Oriental - a hotel that not only has exemplary meeting facilities and luxuriously appointed rooms, but provides one of the friendliest welcomes in Singapore. A truly outstanding property. ●



MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

World's No. 1
Organization for Certified Events Training



As the world's leading body, MPI has 24 thousand members in 80 countries

LEARN TO ORGANIZE AND MANAGE WORLD-CLASS EVENTS

9th – 13th November 2008
Movenpick Tower & Suites
Doha, Qatar



Global Certificate in Meeting Operations 1 The 5 Day Program Led by International MPI Trainers Covers:

- Event management & methodology
- Venue operations & selection
- Budgeting & financial reporting
- Contracting & legal issues
- Registration & housing
- Plan F&B to budget
- Trouble shoot A/V
- Risk assessment
- Event marketing plans
- Setting ethical agendas
- Applying adult learning principles

Delegate fee **US\$2500** INCLUDES: Student Assessment to qualify and obtain your MPI certification



REGISTER NOW ☎ +974 454 8000 📞 +974 454 8047 ✉ enquiries@qmdi.qf.org.qa 🌐 www.qmdi.com.qa/mpi

sponsored by

مركز قطر
الوطنية للمؤتمرات
Qatar National
Convention Centre
Member of Qatar Foundation

organized by

QMDI
مركز قطر للتطوير المهني والمؤتمرات
Qatar MICE Development Institute
A Qatar Foundation Joint Venture