

# BEWARE! HURRAH!

## The Asians are coming!



FEAR HAS GIVEN WAY TO FORTITUDE IN THE INTERFACE BETWEEN ASIANS AND NON-ASIANS. WHEN NEED TIPS THE SCALES, AN ACCOMMODATION CAN ALWAYS BE FOUND BETWEEN THEM AND US. WHOEVER THEM AND US MIGHT BE. ROB SPALDING REPORTS.

Top left: Hans Friis,  
Brähler ICS AG

Top right: Ho Kwon Ping,  
Banyan Tree

Right: keynote speaker  
Kishore Mahbubani



**N**ot long now till China and India become the dominating forces on the face of the planet. So non-Asian association executives will need to prepare for it.

Even learning about it second hand, from the gathering of international convention centre directors – AIPC - meeting in Singapore is better than missing it entirely.

So Kishore Mahbubani, Dean and Professor at the National University of Singapore, who's made a special study of these things, began the vital experiential process.

Asians are learning rapidly. "In 2010, ninety per cent of all Phds will be Asian. China has the greatest pool of unused brainpower in the world. They want to learn best practice wherever they can find it. They have peace, they believe in the rule of law, but above all these they worship education."

However, Mahbubani warned, the biggest risk to the region is a new geo-political system.

"The world's greatest emerging power is China. Europe's past is Asia's future."

"Asians will finally attain a level of economic development where their peoples will start to travel inside and outside their countries." That statement was from Ho Kwon Ping, creator and executive chairman of one of the world's most intriguing quality brands, Banyan Tree. He was talking tourism, so conferencing cannot be far behind.

There was a price to pay. "Sustainable tourism will become an endangered ideal as our global industry lurches towards an almost reckless growth."

And he had figures:

- \* Asia already accounts for some 35-40 per cent of the world's GDP.
- \* The Group of 7, the club of the world's

richest nations, will grow to more than 30 countries by 2030.

- \* China is already the third largest source of dollar millionaires, and soon will be number two, with some 320,000 super-rich people.
- \* By 2040 India will become the world's third largest economy, five times larger than Japan.

Coming down to earth, four diverse and experienced suppliers to the meetings business were asked for their opinions.

Hans Friis, of Brähler ICS AG, conference technology experts, recommended getting involved with influential members of associations from China. "Above all, hire local talent", he advised.

Mike Kelly, now helping to open the new China National Convention Centre in Beijing as executive GM, offered:

"China is the workshop of the world in global manufacture. It focuses on doing everything cheaper. They don't like sharing industry information for the common good.

"Approvals get progressively more difficult. And permissions are many and arduous. There is an over-the-shoulder-backward-looking approach to decision making."

Paul Kennedy, MBE, group director meetings and incentives for Reed Travel Exhibitions, felt the odd one out.

"We are totally dependent on strategic partnerships because we are in for the long haul. There is a lack of convention infrastructure in India," he noted, "although, of course, Hyderabad (convention centre) is an exception. And it signifies what far-sighted investment can do."

Cliff Wallace, MD of Hong Kong HKCEC, and closest to the Asian scene, observed, "There is a shortage of talent in China but the universities are addressing this. You must be committed to patience when you go into relationships with the Chinese.

"We are only 80 miles apart," he pronounced, talking of Hong Kong and China, "but we are probably 80,000 miles apart in attitude and approach. However, there has been an enormous, enormous improvement.

"For association executives, the development in Asia is an opportunity for them because it is giving rise to a huge demand for information about meetings and events." **ami**