

# INDIA PUSHES *business forward*

**Philip Logan, general manager delegate, Hyderabad International Convention Centre and member of AIPC, looks at India's maturing meetings matrix**

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Five years ago, India's tourism business conjured up imagery of the Taj Mahal, royal palaces turned into hotels and exotic colours of the country – a truly different holiday. The 'Incredible India' campaign was instrumental in spreading the message far and wide that India was opening its doors to new guests.

Since then, things have changed, driven by a whole new level of business activity that is in turn stimulating both the convention business and the creation of highly competitive convention centres.

At the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank in May 2006 – the first event to be held at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre – delegates, including 68 finance ministers of the Asian region and world bankers, heard India's former Minister of Finance P. Chidambaram discuss 'Why the elephant is dancing'. His message was about the thrust of business development in India and the way forward for the Indian economy.

With a convention centre that was truly world-class, India was ready to do business with the world, and eager to bid for world congresses. The challenge was a lack of expertise and know-how, with few trained personnel in the meeting industry and a lack of the world-class city infrastructure needed to host large meetings. This was the first time that the city hotels were being told that co-operation was the way to win the business, and sometimes the time lines of the event would have the meeting industry befuddled.

However, there were business opportunities galore. The FDI Confidence Report 2007 stated that India was the second most attractive destination worldwide for investment. Doing business in India had become the new mantra for many global corporations, seen as a way of increasing networking opportunities and forging new business partnerships.

The meeting business took off as a result of growing corporate interest in India. The World Travel Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009 identified India as the host for 33 international exhibitions and trade fairs.

At the same time, Indians are becoming members of trade bodies and associations to increase their business network, which means it now makes more sense for those associations to bring their meetings to India. There are benefits to organisers too, as a 15-17 percent increase has been noticed in visitor registrations in congresses being held in India.

At the Hyderabad International Convention Centre we have started work with local organising committees for various associations to prepare bid documents for presentation and with state tourism authorities to facilitate the event. Training people in the meeting industry is a big part of our agenda as more and more centres are coming up throughout the country and we need more trained people to run the business.

Now, the meeting industry in India is beginning to take off as our people learn, practice and perfect the art of welcoming the delegate who wants to attend a meeting and also go back home with memories of fine Indian hospitality. ●



Philip Logan is a long standing member of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC) and general manager delegate, Hyderabad International Convention Centre



AIPC is an international association of more than 160 of the world's leading convention and exhibition centres around the world. Its mission is to support, encourage and recognise excellence in convention centre operation and management and it supports this mission with activities designed to assist members in improving their level of management expertise in such areas as operations, finance, technology, staff development, marketing, client relations and environment. It is based in Brussels, Belgium.

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