

MICE

Travel Advisor

Volume: 9, Issue: June 2020



Venue Check

CANBERRA

The unique business hub

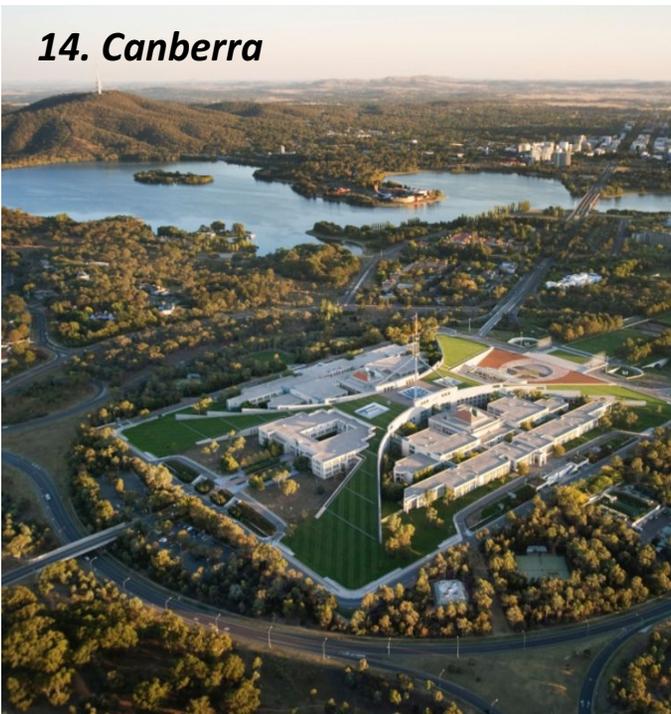
05. Papua New Guinea



05. CENTRE OF ATTRACTION:

The Independent State of **Papua New Guinea** is known for its strong growth in the economy for mining. Here the MICE sector sees huge development with the successful hosting of many international acclaimed events and conferences.

14. Canberra



14. Venue Check: If you are looking for your upcoming business event, **Canberra** will be a good choice as this Australian capital city is easing its lockdown restrictions and opening its parks, hotels and convention centres.

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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

The coronavirus pandemic has harshly affected the MICE industry. With numerous events, meetings and conferences cancelled or postponed across the globe, MICE tourism has been on a standstill since the COVID-19 outbreak. However, as the world is beginning to adapt itself to the 'new normal', various MICE destinations are now considering gradual reopening and planning to recover from the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Malaysia is one such destination that is working towards restarting its value driven MICE industry. Our **Cover Story** dives into the necessary steps undertaken by the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau to reopen the MICE industry of the country. Also read, our conversation with Alan Pryor, Chairman of Business Events Malaysia (BECM) regarding the impact of COVID-19 in the Malaysian events' industry and BECM's role in the road to recovery.

Similarly, there are also some conference venues that have been constantly fighting against the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. In this edition, our **Spotlight On** discusses the Valencia Conference Centre that is standing strong against the impact of the pandemic by adapting to new changes and undertaking various efforts to sustain Valencia as a potential MICE destination after the trying times are over.

In a time when the world is reeling under the effect of the deadly coronavirus outbreak, there are few countries that have successfully declared themselves free of coronavirus. Our **Centre of Attraction** is on Papua New Guinea, Oceania's emerging MICE destination that can also be considered as one of the safest destinations to organise your meetings and conferences as the country currently has no active COVID-19 cases and a complete recovery rate.

In this issue, our **Venue Check** takes a look at the unique business meeting hub, Canberra, as it has slowly started to ease lockdown restrictions. Read on to know more about the uncharted territory of the events industry in the city and the MICE opportunities offered by the Australian capital.

As the work-from-culture has been on the rise in light of the coronavirus pandemic, organising meetings from the comfort of one's home has also become a part of the 'new normal'. Taking a step ahead of video conferencing, the Virtual Reality Meeting Spaces have allowed individuals to organise meetings from home in the most advanced way possible. Read our **Tech Talk** to learn more about the latest technology.

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Papua New Guinea is the third largest island country in the world as well as one of the most culturally diverse regions across the globe. The country achieved its sovereign status in 1975 after being ruled by external powers for decades. Known for its strong growth in the mining and resource sector, it was declared as the sixth fastest growing economy in the world back in 2011.

Over the past few years, Papua New Guinea welcomed some of the world's high profile events, meetings, conferences, incentives and exhibitions including the 2015 Pacific Games and the 2018 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit. With the construction of two large conference centres and few remarkable convention hotels, the country started offering MICE tourism opportunities.

Oceania's rising MICE destination



CONVENTION CENTRES

However, the coronavirus pandemic harshly impacted the MICE tourism industry. Numerous events, conferences, meetings, exhibitions and anything of similar nature stood cancelled across the globe. After months of struggle against the deadly virus, many countries are now looking forward to ease their travel restrictions. Similarly, event organisers are also looking for potential venues that can serve as MICE tourism destinations in the post-pandemic world.

Papua New Guinea currently stands as one of the very few countries in the world with no active coronavirus cases and a complete recovery rate. Although travel restrictions continue to stay in force, the venue can serve as one of the safest MICE tourism destinations after the COVID-19 pandemic is over and after the ban on international travel is lifted.



Kutubu Convention Centre

Located in the former quarry site of Port Moresby, the Kutubu Convention Centre is one of the most recognised conference venues in the country. The convention centre has an area of 5000 sq. m. and consists of flexible meeting spaces that open into a grand central foyer, an 800-seat banquet hall and a 1000 sq. m. open air function space as well as food and beverage outlets. The six meeting rooms are equipped with contemporary conference facilities and can accommodate up to 120 guests. The rooms also open to outdoor terraces. Additionally, there is a private boardroom with built-in TVs that can hold around 14 people. The banquet hall or ballroom is ideal for hosting large gatherings. The space can also be divided into three soundproof rooms. The convention centre also has an outdoor venue or amphitheatre that offers tiered seating arrangements and a floor space for cultural performances and outdoor dining. Coupled with an adjacent glass-enclosed event space, the area provides a unique space for events and gatherings.



Port Moresby International Convention Centre

The Port Moresby International Convention Centre located in Waigani is the first large meeting centre in Papua New Guinea. Constructed by the China IPPR International Engineering Company, the project was initially completed in 2015. Later, the convention centre was refurbished and renovated in 2017 as a part of China's aid to the country. The venue covers an area of 9,920 sq. m. and can host up to 7000 people at one time. It has been home to various Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) events as well as other national and international conferences. The centre has more than 10 conference rooms, a main auditorium, a range of smaller meeting rooms and a 700-seat theatre. The latest renovation introduced more rooms, a multifunctional hall, a dining hall and a press centre. Set alongside a glistening fountain and adorned with tribal motifs, the venue stands as a representative of China and Papua New Guinea's friendship.

Grand Papua Hotel

Accommodations with Meeting Spaces

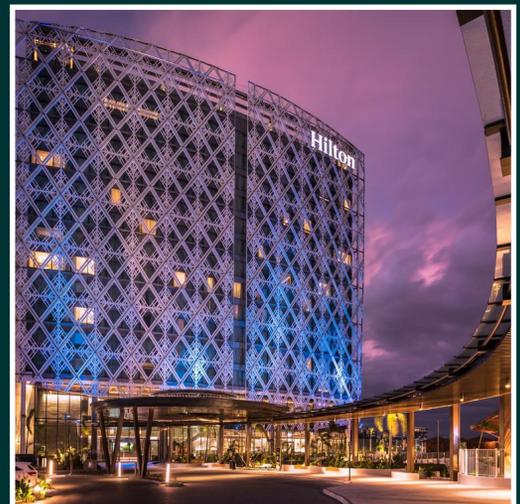
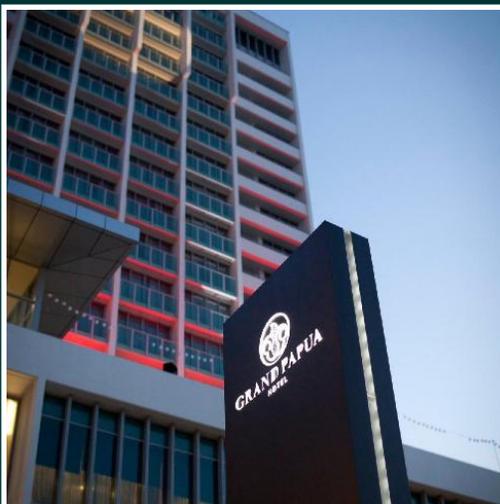
Considered to be the very first deluxe hotel in Papua New Guinea, the property is an ideal venue for business travellers. The building represents the tradition and history of the region blended with contemporary interior designing. It features approximately 161 rooms and suites. The hotel is also known for its flexible meeting and conference venue. It has three executive board rooms and six other separate conference rooms. It also has a professional team to assist the organisation and execute any events, banquets, conferences or meetings.

Tufi Resort

One of the most extravagant properties in the country, the Tufi Resort is a paradise for business and leisure travellers. The boutique resort serves as a luxurious accommodation option with panoramic views of the sea and other natural bounties. The resort also has its own conference centre, situated slightly away from the main building. It is equipped with contemporary meeting facilities and can hold up to 40 guests. The venue can be used to organise meetings, seminars, conferences as well as team building exercises. The resort also offers a variety of fun activities like scuba diving, kayaking and snorkelling among others. The venue is an ideal hub to entwine business with leisure.

Hilton Port Moresby

Connected directly to the Kutubu Convention Center, the property is one of the finest convention hotels in the region. It offers more than 200 guest rooms and suites as well as a variety of signature dining options. In addition, the hotel has its own meeting spaces, a column-free banquet hall and an outdoor amphitheatre area. The conference rooms are equipped with modern audio-visual technology with sound system and video conferencing facilities.



Explore Papua New Guinea



Besides offering conference and meeting opportunities, Papua New Guinea is also home to various tourism delights and adventure activities. Visit **Mount Wilhelm** and experience the journey of hiking to the country's tallest mountain. Enjoy trekking through the Kokoda Trail and witness the important World War II site. Experience the flora and fauna at its finest in **Moitaka Wildlife Sanctuary**. Indulge into the wilderness by paying a visit to the **Rainforest Habitat**. Witness the region's tribal art, culture and tradition by paying a visit to the **National Museum and Art Gallery**.



MICE BITES

BECM APPEALS MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MASS GATHERING AND MICE EVENTS

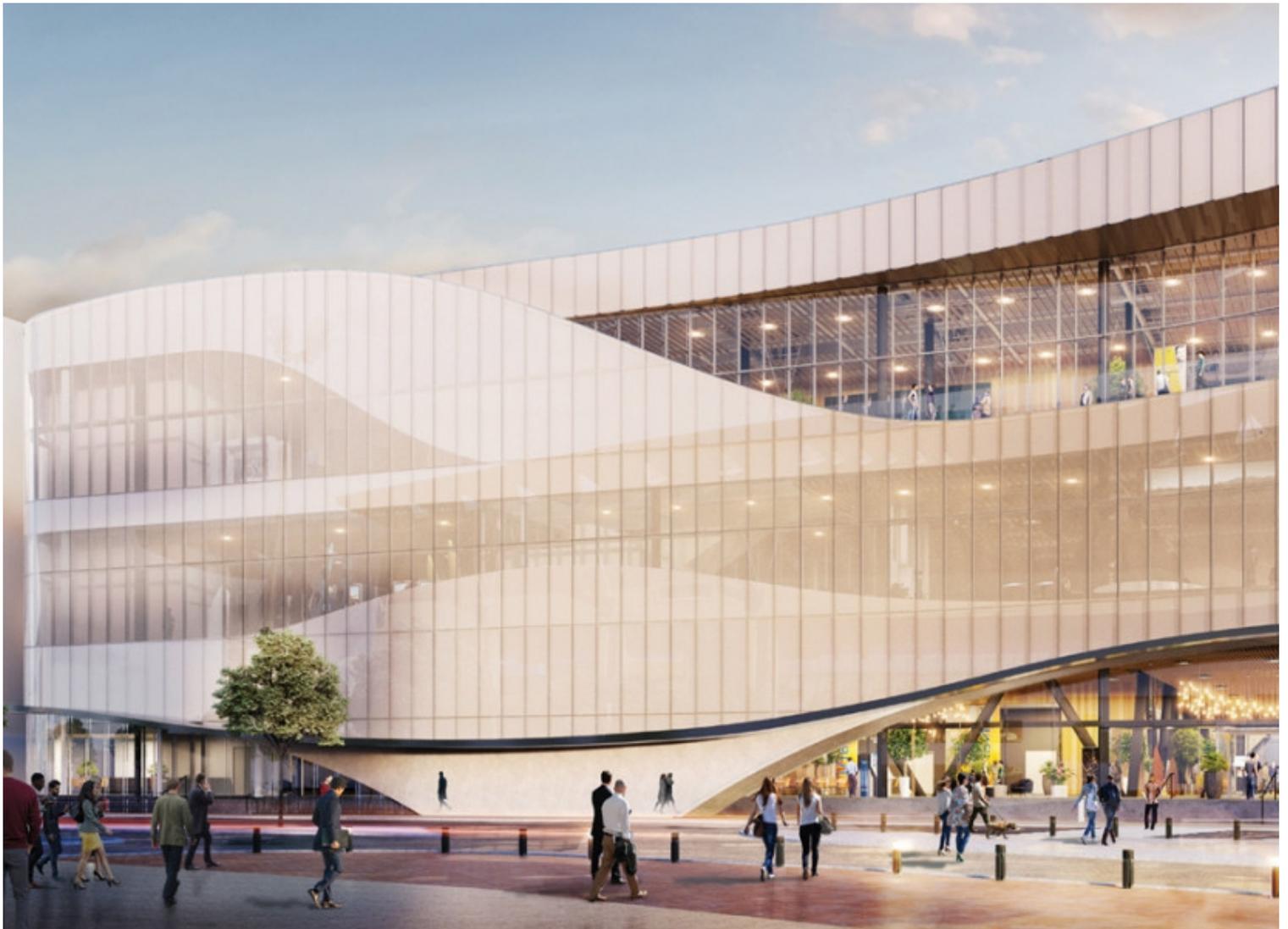
The Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM) is appealing to the government of Malaysia to create a clear difference or distinctions between MICE business events and mass gatherings with a view to establishing a resume date for this vital financial sector. Currently, under the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) conferences and exhibitions are prohibited from taking place.

The Chairman of BECM, Alan Pryor, said that it was important that the government of Malaysia understood that the business events industry can operate safely under comprehensive Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The business events venues and facilities of Malaysia can offer controlled environments combined with high quality operational standards to ensure the health and safety of people, which has always been and will continue to be, a primary concern of the business events industry. As such, the business events sector should not be subject to the mass gathering restrictions that apply to other large-scale events such as weddings, religious gatherings, sports events and concerts.





RECONSTRUCTION WORK OF WELLINGTON CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE BEGINS

Amid the pandemic COVID-19 risk, the construction work of New Zealand's NZ\$179 million Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre (WCEC) is slightly ahead of its reconstruction agenda. All 220 piles have been put in place and 60 per cent of the base layer concrete had been poured when the Alert Level Four lockdown was imposed by the

government of New Zealand. The construction work is under way again as New Zealand moves to Alert Level Three. This newest 18,000 sq.m conference facility is extended across two floors capable of hosting multiple smaller conferences simultaneously or a large convention of up to 1400 delegates.

VALENCIA CONFERENCE CENTRE IS BOOSTING MICE TOURISM

The COVID -19 has created a deep impact in travel and tourism business. The shift in the global environment due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus has drastically hit the MICE tourism industry, which is one of the main drivers of local economies. Valencia Conference Centre as a specialist venue in this sector is gearing up to adapt to the new challenges posed and to sustain Valencia as a benchmark conference destination. The entire team at the Valencia Conference Centre is working

seamlessly at a strategic, tactical and operational level to turn this threat into an opportunity for improvement and progress. This task also includes the Centre's suppliers or “strategic allies”, whose contributions help to attract business. The initiatives that are being carried out are aimed at optimising expenditure, minimising the loss of events and intensifying efforts to win new bids that will help to boost the portfolio and generate new income.



THAILAND CONVENTION & EXHIBITION BUREAU (TCEB) LAUNCHES VIRTUAL MEETING SPACE

The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau launches a “Virtual Meeting Space” project, which is providing a huge support for global MICE entrepreneurs by running business events online via

a virtual platform. In addition to this, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau is also launching a programme Covid-19 Free Meetings to MICE Venues to improve their future safety and health standards.



CANBERRA

The unique business hub

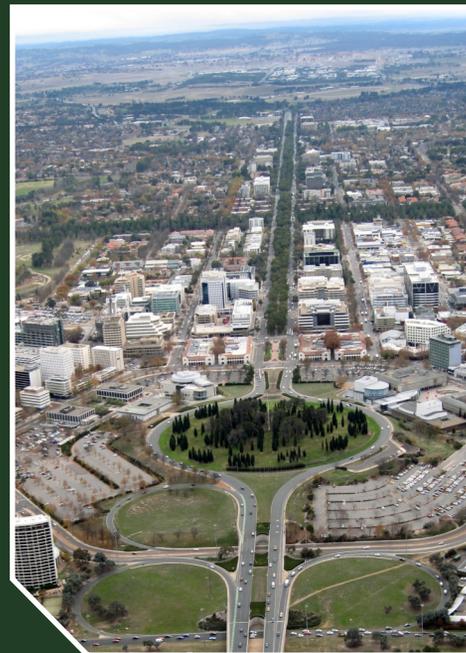
Venue Check



Canberra is the place where ideas emerge, circulate and grow. It offers significant competitive advantage making an impact on the business scenario across the world.

The lockdown restrictions have been loosened and a spate of public parks, national parks, outdoor fitness stages, public BBQs will be opening. Cafes and restaurants across Canberra will be able to offer dine-in options for up to 10 patrons while still adhering to social distancing measures.

According to the Federal Government, Australia's monthly economic output will rise by \$9 billion after the final domestic restrictions are lifted.



There is a strong need to go back to normal. Germany and China just gave the nod to restart the trade shows. Although every country is interpreting the easing of lockdown differently, the ban on mass gatherings still remains effective.

Although the stakes are higher, it is time to go deeper into the uncharted territory of the event industry in Canberra.

National Convention Centre Canberra

The multiple award-winning National Convention Centre is the largest, purpose-built conference and event venue offering more than 8200 sq. m. of space and 15 venues over two floors. It was opened in 1989.

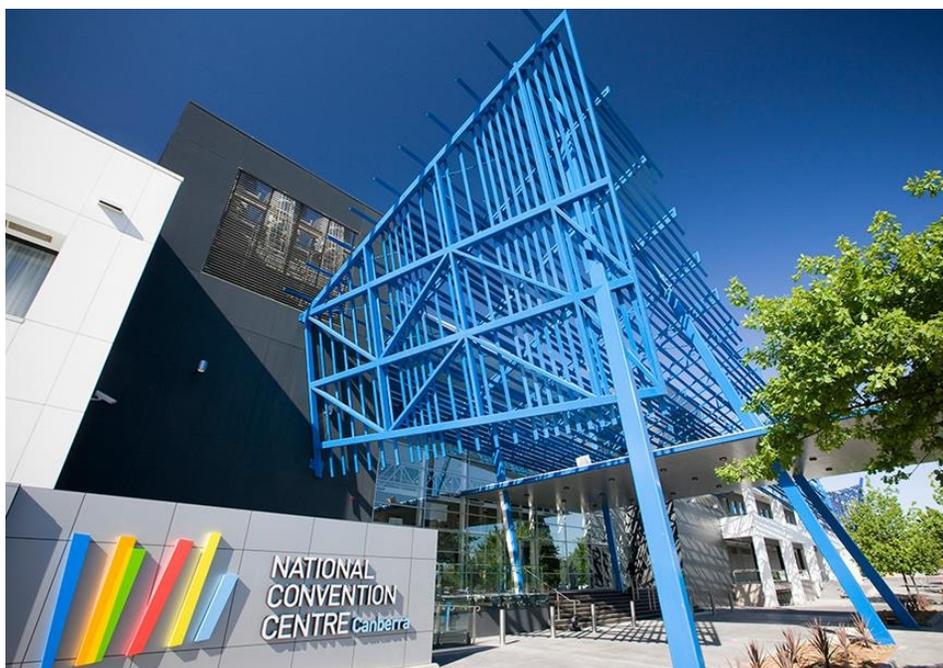
It has a royal theatre, four purpose-built tiered theatres (various sizes), exhibition hall, ballroom, five flat floor gallery rooms, four work rooms and various foyer areas.

It is managed by the Inter Continental Hotels Group (IHG) and owned by the ACT government. It is ideal for hosting concerts, charity dinners, corporate events, associations, government and corporate conferences.

Sustainability

In 2015 it won the Qantas Award for Excellence in sustainable tourism at the Canberra Region Tourism Awards. It was recognised for sixth year in a row by the ACT Government's Actsmart program for its 'Actively Recycling' efforts.

It has a building energy system that monitors output and reduces energy. The light bulbs are replaced with more efficient LED lighting. The comprehensive recycling programme helped it in saving 176.47 tonnes of greenhouse gases restricting 79.46 tonnes of waste to landfill in 2015.



Infrastructure

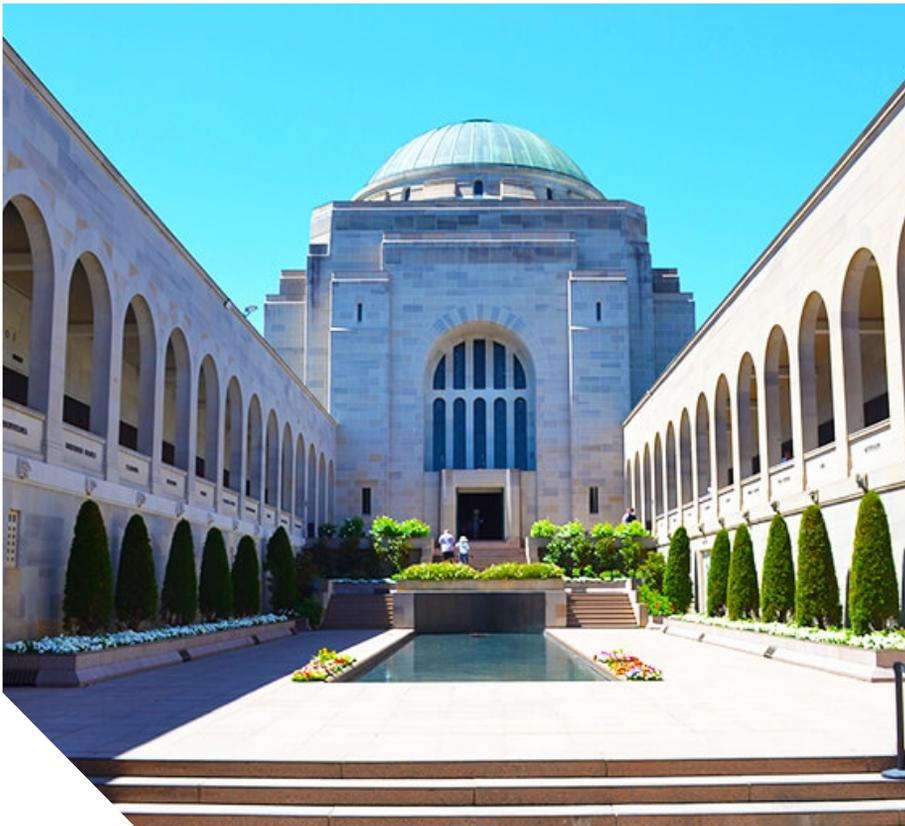
The centre has compact and logical design with versatile spaces and a collection of 15 spaces over two floors. The \$5.4 million refurbishment brought major improvements in the centre. The centre is located at a close proximity of 7km from Canberra's award-winning airport. The deluxe Crown Plaza Canberra is just a stone's throw away. It is 3-minute away from the city centre and is easily accessible to different Caribbean experience.

There are spaces for massive gatherings and small meetings. It has a capacity of holding 300 delegates with plenary spaces for 2,400 delegates and trade exhibitions can host 120 booths.

WHERE TO HEAD AFTER CONFERENCING?

The Australian War Memorial

The world-class museum is a shrine hosting an extensive archive that brings forth the Australian war experience and its impact on the society. It commemorates the sacrifice of the Australians died in the war. It assists the Australians in interpreting and understanding the war experience and its long lasting impact in the Australian society.



Parliament House

The home of Australia's Parliament is the only parliamentary building to be availed for private use in the world. In the focal point of Canberra, 226 members of the parliament gather to represent the Australian people and make decisions for the nation.

View the historic documents, the impressive Australian art collection and the world's largest tapestries based on Arthur Boyd design. Capture the best view of Canberra from the building's roof and the iconic 81 m high flag mast considered to be one of the world's largest stainless steel structures.

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA)

It is the Commonwealth of Australia's national cultural institution for visual arts. The portfolio agency under the Department of Communication and Arts develops and maintains the national collection of works of art.

The stunning architecture, expansive space and the magnificent mountain, lakeside and city views will make one spellbound. Its multi-million dollar extension, the Gandel Hall – a high ceiling pillarless event space– was unveiled in September 2010.

The Big Group supports event organisers in curating the best event experiences taking upto 350 guests for banquet style and 900 guests for cocktail party.



ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE

Accommodate Canberra

The seasoned property management company provides from one, two and three bedroom apartments to penthouse residences. It is centrally located at a distance of 0.2 km from the National Convention Centre. It also offers luxurious, fully furnished, elegant and serviced executive apartment.



Crowne Plaza

Situated 0.3 km from the National Convention Centre Canberra, the award-winning hotel is amidst some of the country's most iconic historical landmarks.

Located adjacent to the Glebe Park, there are ample of shops, restaurants, entertainment venues and the city's major shopping centre, with over 260 retailers, cafes etc. The 24 hour Business Centre is fully equipped to meet all your needs, be it finishing a project or sending an email apart from premium amenities like on-site gym and sauna.



DAVID TAYLOR IS THE NEW COO OF LORE GROUP

David Taylor has been appointed as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Lore Group. The announcement was made by the company, shortly after CEO Billy Skelli-Cohen stepped down from his position. David comes with 25 years of experience in the hotel industry. Lore Group is an international hospitality company operating in the United States and Europe. It independently designs, transforms, manages, and operates hotels in key cities within its Lore Collection portfolio. It also oversees properties created and managed by some of the leading brands in the hospitality industry. The new appointment comes as the company continues to grow its portfolio of thoughtfully designed hotels and hospitality concepts.



CHARLESTOWNE HOTELS NEW CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF F&B

Charlestowne Hotels proudly announces the appointment of Anthony Langan to its corporate team. As the brand's director of food & beverage, Anthony will implement and lead strategic operations to help continually enhance and innovate offerings in Charlestowne's 135+ F&B outlets across a varied portfolio of hotels. Anthony will bring 15 years of extensive hospitality experience to his new role, with the majority of his career spent in popular culinary destinations including Chicago, Nashville and Denver. Before joining Charlestowne, Anthony served as the corporate director of food & beverage for Vision Hospitality Group's boutique and lifestyle hotels.

MICE APPOINTMENTS



**PHILADELPHIA
CONVENTION AND
VISITORS BUREAU
WELCOMES GREGG
CAREN AS NEW
PRESIDENT AND CEO**

The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau has named Gregg Caren as the tourism organisation's new president and CEO. Gregg Caren has more than three decades of experience in this travel and tourism industry. He most recently served as executive vice president of sales and strategic business development for Conshohocken-based ASM Global.



**APOC AVIATION'S
ENGINE TRADING
DIVISION WELCOMES
JIM NYPELS**

APOC Aviation has brought Jim Nypels into its new Engine Trading Division as the organisation prepares for a return to increased leasing and trading activity. Nypels has been with APOC since the start of the business in 2015. After a period as Warehouse & Logistics Manager he moved to project management focusing on airframe teardowns – a core activity for the innovative leasing, trading, aircraft component and part-out specialist.



**SUNIL TULI IS THE NEW
PRESIDENT OF ASIA
PACIFIC TRAVEL RETAIL
ASSOCIATION (APTRA)**

Sunil Tuli has been voted by the Asia Pacific Travel Retail Association (APTRA) board as the new President of APTRA. He is currently the Group Chief Executive of King Power Group (Hong Kong) and is an experienced and respected senior executive in the global travel retail industry. He is also a founding board member of APTRA and held the position of President for three consecutive terms from 2007 until 2013.

VIRTUAL REALITY MEETING SPACES



The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made work from home the 'new normal'. With travel restrictions and social distancing norms in force around the world, numerous people across the globe have been asked by employers to undertake remote working while staying confined in their own residences. However, every individual who is presently working from home is now largely dependent on digital or virtual mediums to carry forward the work process.

Similarly, as an integral part of the work-from-home model, meetings had to take a digital turn and adapt to fit into the virtual space. The current scenario has compelled the meeting industry to go digital. Various virtual mediums are being used to organise meetings in order to connect and communicate with employees and coworkers. As the face of the meeting industry is changing in light of the coronavirus pandemic, new ideas and innovative models are being considered to enhance the quality of meetings from the comfort of one's own home.

One of the latest technologies introduced to organise meetings from home are the virtual reality meetings spaces. These VR meetings spaces go a step ahead in video conferencing and allow people to present computer-generated representatives or virtual avatars of themselves in a prototype virtual reality meeting room. The technology offers the people a better alternative to video calls and allows them to organise advanced meetings amid the unprecedented situation.

The virtual reality meeting spaces enable people to be present at the same virtual space during a meeting. The VR technology allows everyone involved in a particular meeting to express and understand other participants in a much better way. Participants can follow each other's expressions, movements, body language and voice tones through their 3D avatars resulting in better communication during a meeting. People can work together in a real-time virtual environment using interactive whiteboards without the need for travelling. One can also immerse themselves in virtual space simulation and avoid every distraction in their surroundings.

Therefore, VR meeting spaces are becoming an ideal technology to experience advanced meetings and teamworks while remaining inside one's own house. Read on to know about some virtual meeting spaces that can be used to organise advanced meetings from home.



MeetinVR

The logo for MeetinVR, featuring the text "MeetinVR" in a white, sans-serif font on a dark grey rectangular background.

Considered to be one of the best virtual reality meeting spaces available today, MeetinVR aims to connect virtual and physical spaces together. The platform was introduced as a primary meeting and working space of the future. It has different virtual workspaces that can connect businesses and employees from different corners of the globe under one virtual roof. It also provides the option to select different virtual environments that even includes traditional meeting rooms. The application is also connected to an online portal that allows participants to upload files that can be organised and shared with colleagues. The avatars of this platform are also customisable and provide a real experience. In addition, it is also planning to provide a speech-to-text solution in form of a virtual smart watch that can enable easy typing options.

Vive Sync

The logo for Vive Sync, featuring a blue infinity symbol icon followed by the text "SYNC" in a white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

Created by recognised consumer electronics company, HTC, the platform is an all-in-one virtual meeting and collaboration solution. It allows companies to create customised avatars for employees, make a private virtual meeting room and organise face-to-face avatar meetings. The platform also offers a suite of interactive 3D meeting tools that can be used to review 3D interactive content in the best possible ways. In the light of the coronavirus pandemic and the rise in work-from-home culture, HTC recently announced that the application has been made available in free beta for businesses and remote employees. The application improves communication and productivity of business meetings from home. It supports nearly 30 participants for one particular meeting. Avatars can be created by uploading one simple selfie photo.

Glue



The universal collaborative platform is ideal for business professionals to organise meetings and work in teams in one single virtual environment from different places across the world. The avatars of the platform are highly expressive and properly represent the gestures and movement of their users. They are also enabled with non-verbal communication as well as voice equipped communication. The platform also has spatial audio to give participants an idea about natural surroundings. It also comes with a special toolkit that has post-it notes, whiteboards and free-hand 3D drawing options, all of which can be used during a meeting session to share ideas and plans.

vSpatial



Considered to be one of the most visually impressive applications to host meetings in a virtual reality space, vSpatial enables people to work together from anywhere in the world. The application is capable of conjuring virtual displays and allows one to include any Windows 10 application in the VR workroom. The avatars of the platform are extremely expressive and appear close to reality. It also allows the creation of customised team spaces, auditoriums and productivity rooms to suit the required specification of a team and individual. The application also offers unique 3D data visualisation or editing facility. Currently, it requires a Windows computer and mainstream tethered VR headsets to function but due to the present working scenario, the team has been working to bring the app to standalone VR headsets.

Rumii



The application functions as a social-virtual reality space that can be used for meetings, communications, trainings and educational purposes. It is an enhanced, invite-only, closed virtual space that allows cross-platform connection including Android, PC, MAC and is functional, with all major PC VR headsets. Alongside custom avatars and realistic spaces, it also offers a widget board featuring real-life collaboration tools that can be embedded in the virtual space. It also has a shared asset logic that allows teams to collaborate images, videos, 3D objects and other essential materials in a rapid way. The meetings of the platform are reloadable allowing individuals to preserve objects and other assets in a virtual space that they can revisit and refer later.

VALENCIA CONFERENCE CENTRE

Standing strong against coronavirus challenges

Considered to be one of the best convention centres in the world, the Valencia Conference Centre or Palacio de Congresos de Valencia is located at the heart of the city of Valencia. Established by the Kings of Spain in 1998 and designed by the award-winning British architect Norman Foster, it was awarded the title of World's Best Conference Center by the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC) in 2010 and 2018 respectively.





The centre has been a pioneer in driving international business travellers to the city of Valencia. It has successfully organised nearly 3000 events and hosted up to 2.1 million attendees so far. However, similar to the rest of the world, the biggest challenge for the Valencia Conference Centre came in the form of the COVID-19 outbreak. The MICE industry across the globe has been harshly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Numerous meetings, conventions, exhibitions, conferences and other events now stand cancelled for an indefinite period of time.

As a specialist venue of the MICE tourism industry in Spain, the Valencia Conference Centre decided to fight against the threat caused by the pandemic. The centre is currently working to adapt to the new challenges with the aim of sustaining Valencia as a potential MICE destination amid the coronavirus crisis and the post-pandemic world.

The entire team at the Valencia Conference Centre is tirelessly working to transform the threat into an opportunity for further improvement and progress. They have already begun working at a strategic, tactical and operational level to minimise the loss of events, optimise expenditure, dedicate efforts to win new connections that can ultimately boost the portfolio of the venue and generate new income. Although the conference centre is currently closed for safety measures, authorities and associates are working to build a bigger and brighter future for the venue after the hiatus.

EFFORTS TO FIGHT COVID-19 CHALLENGES



Postponing over cancellation

Irrespective of the uncertainty of the present situation as well as the future of the MICE tourism industry, the event organisers at the Valencia Conference Centre believe in maintaining a positive attitude. Therefore, they have decided to postpone majority of the events rather than cancelling them as a whole. The team has been working to keep the rate of cancellation to the minimum. Only 14 events have been cancelled so far. Most of the events have been postponed to autumn 2020 or the forthcoming year. All decisions are being undertaken with the consent of healthcare authorities. Nearly 85 events have already been confirmed for 2021 with more reservations set to arrive after the centre reopens. The situation is likely to lead towards a positive opening for MICE tourism in Valencia next year.

A glance at the venue

The Valencia Conference Centre has a total area of 15,581 sq. m. and can accommodate more than 2,250 people at one time. It is an ideal venue to organise large conventions and conferences as well as small and medium-sized events. The magnificent architecture and state-of-the-art facilities are specially designed to attract business travellers to the city. It consists of three main auditoriums or convention halls, 9 commission rooms or meetings spaces and a 1,077 sq. m. exhibition hall. Additionally, the building also has several multipurpose and VIP rooms, press rooms and a separate 7,000 sq. m. garden area.



Sustainability and CSR activities

The centre is committed to environmental sustainability in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It tries to ensure the usage of sustainable products and production as well as invest in infrastructure to deliver sustainable development. The centre has already earned the highest level of CO₂ emission reduction in the property's energy certification. It has also undertaken various measures to combat climate change and its effect and contributes to move forward Valencia's smart city strategy.

Research and Innovative Projects

The conference centre has also undertaken various research studies and innovative projects in order to attract new businesses once the trying times are over. For example, the “Palcon Expand Initiative” will bring the latest technology to make the centre capable of hosting 'hybrid' events. The project aims to bring together nearly 10,000 virtual participants who can be present at the venue alongside delegates physically conducting an event. Meanwhile, the “Mapping Project” is working towards adding 3D projection mapping and powerful lighting equipment to introduce spectacular staging options that are highly essential for the current infrastructure. On the other hand, the “Overflow Project” is focussing on creating an interconnected convention space to hold large meetings involving more than 3000 people while maintaining social distancing measures. In addition, projects like “*Your Signage*” and “*Your Event*” are trying to offer customised presentations to organisers with the help of visual technology, animation and 3D features that would allow them to witness personalised experiences of their meetings prior to the actual event.

Work Groups

Alongside the projects, the centre has also arranged inter-departmental working groups. These groups look after the participation of every staff member in the projects undertaken by the conference centre. They have been created with the aim to develop initiatives that concern the organisation as a whole. They have already commenced working on initiatives like promoting social commitment based on compliance with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and updating the crisis management procedures established to deal with critical situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Way Forward

Moreover, the Valencia Conference Centre is also working towards securing its position and operations for the future. Over the past few weeks, the team has submitted nearly 22 bids for congresses and conventions to be held up to the year 2027. They even succeeded in winning an important bid— a national congress that will be held in Valencia for three separate years (2021, 2024 and 2027). These conferences will invite more than 1000 individuals for each event, all of which will be hosted by the Valencia Conference Centre.



Cover Story

RESTARTING MALAYSIA'S VALUE-DRIVEN MEETINGS INDUSTRY



The business event industry in Malaysia has everything you need for a successful convention or meeting. It can be a board meeting, business meeting, and international summit or MICE-centric incentive trip for international delegates. Or it can be a team building get-together, conference for key stakeholders, or exhibition to showcase your brand.

As coronavirus pandemic looms throughout the world, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) cancelled all its events and meetings. The Malaysian government has implemented Movement Control Order from mid-March, thereby restricting all modes of connectivity. This makes a huge economic loss in MICE and tourism industry. So, in order to restore the country, the **Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau** has taken necessary steps to open the MICE market in the country.

Malaysia has fast emerged as one of the most preferred meeting destinations. It has fully developed infrastructural facilities, remarkable economic development, extensive MICE expertise, pleasant tropical climate and guest-friendly culture. This Asian country assures a comfortable, inspiring sojourn. Malaysia is a melting pot of South Asian cultures living in harmony, where law and order is upheld by citizens and government alike. This land promises guests a secure and peaceful time. Every year, most of the mega trade events are held here like the Malaysia International Furniture Fair, the Foodex Asia and the Medical Scientific Exhibition & Conference. Here you can get a wide array of convention centres with good connectivity, all of which are supported by state-of-the-art facilities, experienced staff and professional services.

Malaysia's MICE Scenario



Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau has postponed and cancelled almost all of the internationally acclaimed events from June to November. The earliest rescheduled event begins from June 23, while the last one begins on November 30. They have taken various precautions on the postponement and cancellation of events following the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to restore the economy, they are in touch with the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, the Ministry of International Trade & Industry and the Ministry of Defence to stimulate the domestic market first to gain the confidence of international MICE market. For this, Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM) has appealed the Malaysian government to establish some clear distinction in between business events and mass gatherings. This will also able to establish a restart time for this crucial economic sector in the country.

**Extensive
Collaboration
with Malaysian
Government**



The Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM) and the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau are planning to reinstate the MICE business by operating Comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures.

The Chairman of BECM, **Alan Pryor** said it was important that the govt. of Malaysia understood that the business events industry can operate safely under comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The business event venues and facilities can offer environments combined with high quality operational standards to guarantee the health and safety of people, which has always been and will continue to be a main concern of the business event industry.

**Operating
Comprehensive
Standard
Operating
Procedures
(SOPs)**

With Malaysia's business events and tourism industry already suffering from the postponement and cancellation of events, potential layoffs and business closures have already happened. Now the event industry planners and convention bureaus are hoping for a quick recovery, with many taking the downtime to up skill staff, identify new leads for future events and strengthen networks. They are now focusing more on virtual events. Malaysia's two major convention centres in Kuala Lumpur have taken steps to innovate and promote online events as the business events industry falls due to lockdown. The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (the Centre) is also supporting the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau in the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) launch of its unique online education platform, IAPCO WebEDGE. This unique and most innovative virtual platform will support Professional Congress Organisers (PCOs) by providing globally accredited training, which is designed to enhance their professionalism and raise their capacity and capability to meet the current and future industry expectation, needs and demands of the country's MICE market.

**Strong focus
on virtual
events**



FACE TO FACE

As, COVID-19 has created a global pandemic throughout the world, Alan Pryor, Chairman of Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM) spoke to MICE Travel Advisor, on the impact of novel coronavirus. Read the full interview here:

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: How Business Events Council Malaysia (BECM) is planning to flourish Malaysian MICE market in post COVID-19 time?

Alan Pryor: There has been a very strong collaboration taking place within the business and events' industry supply chain and our bureau, Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB). MyCEB has been heavily involved in facilitating and elevating our engagement with Government on our recovery plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to demonstrate the state of readiness and preparedness undertaken by industry to



resume business events.

We are also undertaking advocacy and lobbying through direct engagement with key Ministries, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture; Ministry of International Trade & Industry; and Ministry of Defence, to communicate and differentiate business events from mass gatherings. The focus will be on stimulating the domestic market first and we will then focus on regional events once borders open up. The long-term focus will be on targeted global business events once access issues have been addressed and attendee confidence has been restored.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: Tell us about the impact of COVID-19 in the event industry of Malaysia.

Alan Pryor: For Malaysia, like most world-class business events destinations, the impact has been extreme. Event cancellations or postponements affect the whole supply chain from event planners and exhibition organisers, to the accommodation and aviation sectors, to name just a few. We are really experiencing major challenges with respect to business continuity and revenue losses.

According to a Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS) survey, a few thousand business events will be affected, and this includes over 300 trade and consumer exhibitions, as well as hundreds of local and international conferences and other events. The losses from these cancelled events will total around RM2.4 billion (US\$551.1 million), and more than 10,000 employees will be affected.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: How the Malaysian government and Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau is working to combat COVID 19 crisis?

Alan Pryor: In collaboration with MyCEB we are also engaged in supporting and delivering a few industry wide-campaign initiatives to stimulate and kick-start our domestic market. For example, MyCEB is creating packages for the domestic market called Let's Meet Locally, while the regional

market will have a similar initiative called Let's Meet Tomorrow. There is strong collaboration between MyCEB with venues and hotels to kick start and simulate the resumption of bookings and enquiries for business events.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: Are you facing any challenges, while you are planning to reopen Malaysian MICE market?

Alan Pryor: Our major challenge is getting a clear distinction made between business events and mass gatherings, which is delaying the process of us being able to get back to running business events. This is why collectively as an industry, we came together to create our own business events industry SOPs to demonstrate to the Government that Business Events take place in controlled environments combined with internationally recognised and high-quality operational standards to ensure the health and safety of our employees, clients, suppliers and attendees.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: How the Malaysian business events industry will operate safely under comprehensive standard operating procedures (SOPs)?

Alan Pryor: We as industry place a high priority on safety and wellbeing and maintain best practice in this regard. We remain focused on adherence to directives stipulated by the Malaysian Government and guidelines and standards outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Malaysia's

business events venues and facilities can offer controlled environments combined with high quality operational standards to ensure the health and safety of people.

The comprehensive SOPs, which will be further customised for each venue and event, have been developed to help ensure a safe, hygienic and healthy environment for all. As an industry we are able to run extremely well organised events tracing every one of our attendees, speakers and exhibitors as well as monitoring, tracking and putting in place a range of other measures.

We understand that it is crucial in this new environment to deliver assurance and trust, so we are recommending a phased approach to event commencement and delivery. Subject to Government approval we are targeting July for commencement of domestic events with up to 250 participants. Once we secure more Government and customer confidence and support, we will move to phase two with an increase in meetings size and start reaching out to the regional market. Phase three would see us moving to secure meetings with an international focus and rotation, dependent on airline recovery and access.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: Can you please explain the comprehensive standard operating procedures that Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau has put together?

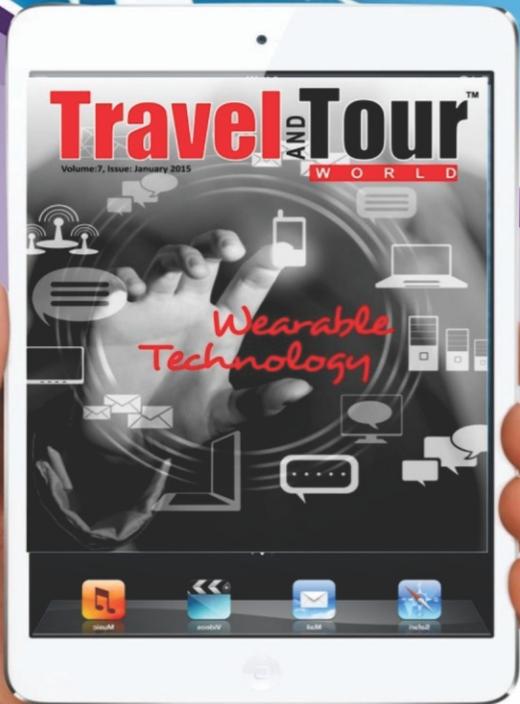
Alan Pryor: It has been very uplifting to see how

our industry supply chain has come together and worked so closely and in solidarity. The comprehensive SOPs outline the new protocols and processes our venues will have in place once they can re-open. Collectively developed by the industry, the SOPs incorporate the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), food safety measures, air quality control, surface cleaning, and physical and social distancing requirements. Based on these SOPs, Malaysian business events venues will also be required to implement a variety of other measures including temperature checks, thermal cameras, hand sanitizers, reduced touch-points, contactless transactions and daily monitoring systems.

We are now encouraging the Malaysian government to consider our industry SOPs, which demonstrate our state of readiness and preparation. We will continue to actively lobby the Government on the value of the business events industry to the economy, and to secure grants and subsidy support for the industry supply chain.

MICE TRAVEL ADVISOR: Are you planning to focus on virtual events and remote conferencing in post coronavirus time?

Alan Pryor: I believe that the global MICE industry as a whole is embracing the new reality that has shifted everyone's focus to virtual events as part of their event delivery portfolio. We expect that there will be various technological innovations that venues and industry players in Malaysia will implement in the new environment.



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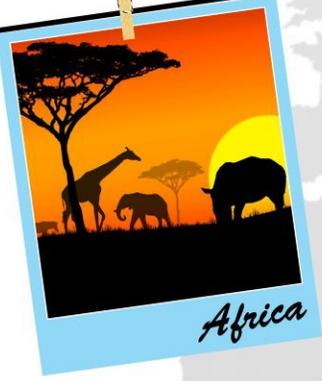
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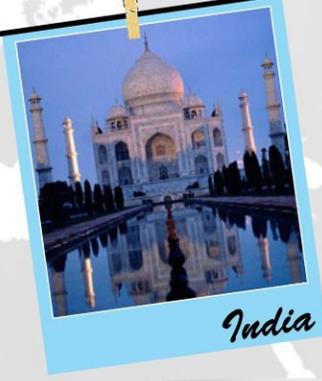
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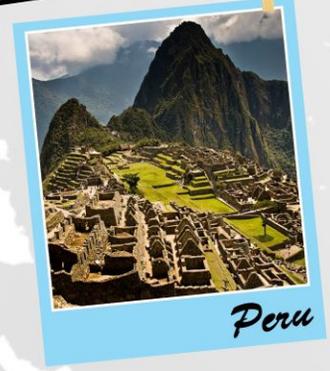
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