

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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TITLE: Knowledge Sharing and Lessons Learned – Traveling to India as a Hosted Buyer at the Global Exhibition on Service (GES) in India.

PURPOSE: Sharing lessons learned from attending the Global Exhibition on Service in Bangalore, India 25 – 29 November 2019.

BACKGROUND: The Consulting Engineers Association of Thailand (CEAT) was invited by the organizers of The Global Exhibition on Services (GES) to attend the event. CEAT passed the invitation to COT to represent the Council and was allotted with two participants.

The Global Exhibition on Services (GES) is India's premier event for service trade promotion between nations. Key sectors involved are Accounting & Finance, Audio-Visual, Communications, Construction and Related Engineering, Education, Environment, Financial, Information Technology, Legal, Medical Value Travel, Transport & Logistics and Tourism & Hospitality. Around 150 participants from various continents such as Africa, South America, North America and Asia participated the event. A total of 29 countries were represented in the exhibition.

ON THE ORGANIZER

AVAILABLE RESOURCES: The Event was organized by Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) funded by the Department of Commerce and the Government of Karnataka. Plane ticket to a max of INR 50,000 (THB 21,500) was provided per participant. Accommodation to a 5-star hotel including airport transfers were also provided. The participant will bear the cost of meals, visa and other expenses.

APPLICATION, PROCESSING AND CONFIRMATION: Invitation to attend the event was already given since last August 2019. The invitation was coursed through the Council of Engineers Association of Thailand (CEAT). Application is easy and can be done through the website. The application is done through the organizers website and it took more than 1 week for the organizers to approve. After the approval, an invitation letter is issued for visa request.

EVENT SCHEDULES: Travel itinerary from the organizers was only emailed a day before the travel.

PICKUP AND TRANSFER TO AIRPORT AND HOTEL: According to the travel advisory, upon arrival to the Airport, we will be greeted by the Airport Representatives from Cozmos Corporate Travel Management (CCTM) holding a placard of "SEPC – GES 2019". CCTM is an outsourced travel agency hired by the organizers for logistics of the participants.

HOTEL ACCOMODATION: I was booked at the Hotel Renaissance, a five star hotel in Bangalore.

KITS: Registration Badges and Kit bags will be provided in the Registration Counter at the venue (Palace Ground) on the first day of the event.

TRANSFER TO AND FROM THE VENUE AND HOTEL: Shuttle Service is provided from the hotel to the venue and vice versa. First bus leaves the hotel at 8:30 am and the second bus at 8:45 am. The venue is about 3 kilometers from the hotel.

VENUE / FACILITIES: The venue is a temporary makeshift structure which is located in the Bangalore Palace grounds, a famous tourist place in Bangalore. It can be taken down after the event.

MATERIALS: Kit bags and other materials was provided in the registration counter during the first day of the event.

ORGANIZER'S ASSISTANCE: Assistance was available in the hotel lobby and in the organizers pavilion during the event.

HOTEL DEPOSITS: The organizers informed the delegates that 100 USD will be collected upon check in as a deposit and will be refunded upon before departure or upon check out.

ON GOING TO INDIA (BANGALORE)

VISA PROCESSING: Online VISA application is a bit tricky. There are many online websites that offer the service with various prices ranging from 82 USD to 250 USD. A call to the Indian Embassy in Bangkok to verify the website is a must as no advice was given from the organizers. An invitation letter from the organizer will facilitate the fast approval of the visa and a waiting period of around 5 working days for the visa processing. A confirmation will be sent once the visa is approved. Print out the visa letter of approval and show to the airline upon check in and to the immigration upon arrival.

AIRPORT: The airport of Bangalore is big. It is a modern organized airport. One can be easily lost since there is a regular VISA lane and online E-Visa lane and the visa on –arrival. Be sure to have a printout of the visa approval and the invitation from the organizers. The immigration will ask for the company you are visiting as you hold a business visa.

HOTEL: It takes around 1 hour travel from the airport to the hotel even though traffic was minimal in the early hours of the morning. Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel Bangalore is a five star hotel with a metal detector upon entry. The gate is fortified with a barrier and all vehicles are examined thoroughly. The organizers are in the lobby to assist the participants.

MONEY EXCHANGES: Money exchange in the airport varies and a service charge is levied. I suggest to procure the INR before travelling to India to avoid unnecessary inconvenience in comparing and looking for currency exchange.

FOOD: Food in India is mostly curry. If you have a weak stomach, better prepare for the travel. There are a lot of local convenient stores and easy to buy supplies like water since they speak fluent English.

TRAVELING ON VEHICLE: There are no taxis in Bangalore. The most common transport is by “Tuktuk” where you have to negotiate the price. UBER is available in Bangalore and very convenient. The price is better than when you haggle with the drivers.

TRAVELING ON FOOT: Depending on the person, travelling on foot can be very challenging as there are no pathways to walk. The roads are congested with different types of vehicles trying to get ahead of

each other. Road infrastructure are narrow considering the volume of vehicles travelling the road. One must be very extra careful when walking alongside the road, as vehicles just drive in any direction they wish. There are no dress code in Bangalore. Most Indian women dress their traditional attire. Mostly, you will find people dress up as per the weather conditions.

Also wear comfortable shoes when walking as the walk ways around the city is not well paved. Watch where you step, as you might fall in an uncovered manhole. When going around, be sure that have a small water bottle and a mask. Although the weather in Bangalore is favourable, dust and other particles are heavy along the road.

WIFI CONNECTIVITY/INTERNET CONNECTION/SIM CARD: Getting a sim card in India is quite difficult. You need to apply for the Sim card, provide a copy of your passport and recent photograph. You also need to have an Indian guarantor for the Sim. It would take 2-3 days for the Sim Card to be activated. I suggest to get a SIM2FLY from AIS in Bangkok Airport before flying to India. Most hotels have a free Wi-Fi but is a must to have a data connection especially if you are using goggle maps to navigate the city.

Comparison between the Planned Activity by the Organizer and the actual event as it happened

Activity	Planned According to the Organizers	Actual as it happened
1. Pick up at the Airport	To be greeted by the Airport representatives from CCTM holding a placard of "SEPC – GES 2019"	Greeted by the CCTM representatives but were passed from one to another without knowing which car to take. The CCTM representatives were disorganized. It took almost an hour to get our ride to the hotel.
2. Hotel Accommodations	Booked at the Hotel Renaissance	Booked at the hotel renaissance but the name is not in the organizers list.
3. Transfer to and from venue and hotel	The schedule is to leave the hotel at 8.45 am on the first day.	Already ready before 8.45 am even though we arrive in the hotel at 3.30 am. I was informed that the departure time to the venue is 10:00 am. I went back to my room to rest but was called to go down at 9:30 am as the will about to leave. Hurriedly, I went down and waited. The exact time of departure is 11:00 am.
4. Kits	Kit bags and other materials will be provided in the registration counter during the first day of the event.	A lot of confusion. Kits bags were distributed by one at a time with pictures taken. A very long line and other participants did not even get the materials.

		No instructions or orientation were given.
5. Organizer's Assistance	Organizer's assistance were set up in the event site and in the hotel.	Personnel in the assistance counter were very helpful but they did not know what to do.
6. Deposit	A deposit of 100 USD was required upon check in and will be refunded on check out	A deposit of 100 USD was given on check in but it took a long time and several calls for us to get the 100 USD refund.
7. Visa	No advice from organizers how to get the visa.	Various websites offer a visa service at different rate. Better call the Indian embassy to get the official site.
8. Money Exchange	No advice on money exchange from the organizers	Airport money exchange offers various rates from 62 to 68 IND to USD. Hotel rates also various from 62 to 64 IND to USD.
9. Food	No advice on the type of food from the organizers	Most food served is curry. If you have a weak stomach, better be prepared.