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Flexible Convention Centres Now in Emerging Countries



Every year, new convention centres are built as the exhibition industry generates great economic benefits. From 2011-2017, venues increased 7.6%, bringing the total number to 1,217 worldwide. While Europe remains the leader in available venue capacities and global market share (45%), the Asia-Pacific region has been riding a wave since 2011. It increased its share from 20.5% to 23.7%, even catching up with North America (23.5%)¹. The Middle East and Africa are poised to follow suit, with some international convention centres already under construction and more to come, notably due to a unique Indian investment initiative to build facilities in 21 African countries².

Focusing on events with the most significant economic impact, many emerging countries have developed modern large-scale complexes, which now constitute the fastest-growing market worldwide (+29%)¹. A challenge is to provide these venues, initially designed for major international events, with the flexibility to host a broad cross-section of activities that require entirely different layouts.



To make the best use of every square metre, built-in flexibility is a proven vital tool. Over the last 16 years, Gala transformable venues - which enable a room of several thousand seats to be converted from a conference auditorium to a flat-floor exhibit hall, within 15 minutes at the touch of a button - have helped convention centres accommodate varied events and audiences, achieve high levels of activity and successfully win international events over other venues. Across emerging countries, the trend to build such versatile state-of-the-art venues has grown to keep pace with exhibition industry needs and compete with established markets. For instance, in 2015 the city of Baku, Azerbaijan, conceived its congress centre as a high-tech mixed-used building which easily adapts to different types and sizes of meetings through a flexible 3,500seat Gala Venue. In 2018, an analogous versatile Gala Venue was installed in Macau together with other innovative technologies to create Asia's first dynamic and immersive 2,000-seat entertainment space. Since its opening, it has primarily hosted corporate events and conferences, however its first theatrical show was launched in July 2019. With quick and automatic overnight or midday changeovers, these venues have multiplied their potential to offer many events within the same day.

Scheduled to open in 2019, the \$4B USD India International Convention and Exhibition Centre (IICC) also follows this model. Designed as a zero-energy flexible facility, it will spread over 80,000 m² in Dwarka, a suburb of New Delhi. Its highlight will be an auditorium for 6,000, made modular and scalable via a 3,000seat Gala Venue. Thereby, it will be equally suited for multilateral state events and large meetings of international calibre, such as G20 Summits. Estimating the exhibition industry at \$280B annually, officials said that "India, after IICC is built, [will be able to] compete with other Asian countries for a slice of this pie."3

The future is beginning to look different with emerging countries working toward taking their place in the exhibition industry alongside already established countries. To become key players in this competitive environment, many have capitalized on built-in flexibility such as that offered by automated *Gala Venues*, to create efficient, versatile spaces that both enhance today's user experience and support the unpredictable demands of the meeting industry for future uses.



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