

# Conventional Sri Lanka

Posted on

Sri Lanka has many advantages for hosting small conferences or large conventions.

A report on the facilities by Hiranthi and Nirmala Abeysekera.



Sri Lanka, famed for its warm hospitality, is endowed with an idyllic blend of features that appeal to all visitors. As well as being a traveller's paradise, this fascinating land is a stimulating venue for international conventions.

A tropical island set in the mystic east, Sri Lanka is surrounded by palm-fringed golden beaches. Being small, (65,610 sq. km; 18 million population) its many tourist attractions are within easy reach of Colombo, the bustling commercial centre. In addition to its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage dating back more than 2,500 years, Sri Lanka is well equipped with up-to-date facilities for hosting international gatherings of the highest level.

Colombo's Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), completed in 1973, was the first hall in the East to be built specifically for hosting conferences. Several prestigious world conferences have been held there including the fifth summit of the Non-Aligned Heads of State.

This magnificent convention complex is located in a quiet residential road lined by massive old shade trees. An octagonal, multi-columned edifice, it is set in 15 hectares of beautifully landscaped garden which has specimens of the principal crops of the island as well as a spice garden, medicinal plants and herbs and indigenous varieties of timber trees.

The air-conditioned complex covers 30,000 sq. m. and comprises four buildings. As well as the main Assembly Hall which can hold 1,500 delegates, there are six committee rooms, display and exhibition halls, a banquet hall, restaurants, VIP lounge, library, press lobby, cinema, luxury lounge, 90 office rooms for delegations and a few residential suites. Also available are the latest in audio-visual and

communication equipment.

With the availability of all these facilities at competitive prices and the close proximity to the city's deluxe and first class hotels, BMICH is an ideal venue to host a convention with a large number of delegates.

Within the city of Colombo there are six five-star hotels which, together with the other major hotels, have 3,795 beds in 2,115 rooms. Facilities for holding international conventions are available at these hotels. Public address systems and recording facilities, audio visual equipment, magiboards and flip charts are provided.

Communication facilities at the hotels include telephones with international direct dialing, telex, fax, postal and courier services. The hotel's business centres are equipped with typewriters, photocopiers, word processors and personal computers and provide secretarial services. Executive floors are available with extras for the business visitor.

The restaurants in the hotels, as well as top rate dining establishment in the city, serve western meal and a wide range of Sri Lankan. Chinese, Japanese, Indian, French, Italian, German, Thai or Korean dishes. Sea food is plentiful.

The five-star hotels are geared to handle banquets and cocktail receptions and special food and beverage requirements for large numbers. Sports, recreation and entertainment facilities are available at the hotels; an added attraction are the high class casinos that operate in them.

All the hotels have exhibition space. Other requirements such as transport and banking facilities are close at hand. The city of Colombo boasts numerous private communication bureaux where fax messages, telexes, and international phone calls can be made at less than hotel rates.



Restaurants are top rate and sea food is plentiful.



The BMICH conference halls is in close proximity to the city's major hotels.



Kandy is ideal for a conference in a less formal setting.

For a conference in a less formal setting, Sri Lanka has several beach resort hotels with meeting facilities and there are also hotels suitable for conferences in Kandy, the medieval hill capital. The lush, green hill country with its tea plantations, panoramic views and breathtaking waterfalls, as well as the famous Temple of the Tooth, are memorable attractions. For scientific and academic seminars requiring concentration, the Institute of Fundamental Studies located in the quiet Hantana Hills of Kandy would be suitable. Equipped with a secretariat, audio visual aids and modern telecommunication facilities, the IFS can accommodate 250 - 300 participants in theatre style. For conventions of a professional, scientific or academic nature, The Agrarian Research and Training Institute (ARTI) at Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7, and the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) at Independence Avenue, provide meeting facilities at extremely low rates. The Sri Lanka National Committee of the International Congress and Convention Association is geared to provide professional assistance and expertise in organizing a successful convention. The committee is a blend of public and private sector organizations comprising the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, Air Lanka, the BMICH, Conventions (Colombo) Ltd, and a number of hotels and travel agents.

Sri Lanka has an advantage over most countries able to host conventions because of its low rates for first hotel accommodation, up-to-date communications, trained hotel and secretarial personnel and an astonishing array of unique attractions. Conventional Sri Lanka means business, and fun too. Information and assistance with planning and organising an international convention in Sri Lanka are available from Cyril Lawrence, Managing Director, Conventions (Colombo) Ltd, 130, Glennie Street, Colombo 2; tel: 437246, 421 JOI; tlx: 21389 KEELS CE; fax: 0094 1 42 1 370, 447087. The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (Director: Ms Nedra Fernando), is at the Ceylon Tourist Board, PO Box 1504, 78, Steuart Place, Colombo 3