Participation in IFSSH & IFSHT in New Delhi:
A “MUST” for 2013

Report of the Secretary General

The Indian Society for Surgery of the Hand will host the 12th Triennial Congress of the IFSSH, 4th-8th March 2013. According to the bylaws, the IFSSH Secretary General together with the local organizers should visit the site of the Congress one year prior to the event to check the venue and accommodation, and discuss the progress of the scientific and social programmes.

On behalf of the IFSSH ExCo, I visited New Delhi, India, exactly one year before the planned meeting along with Lynne Feehan, the President of the International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy (IFSHT). My wife, Melinda, accompanied me to experience the planned programmes for the accompanying persons. Our aim was to simulate the forthcoming event and to achieve this, the Indian Organising Committee prepared a virtual Congress tour for us, as identical as possible to next year’s meeting.

We were hosted by the President of the 2013 Congress, Dr Raja Sabapathy and his colleagues. With Dr Sabapathy and his wonderful wife, Nimmi, who is a professional in organising social and scientific events, we arrived at New Delhi airport from Coimbatore. After a very easy luggage reclaim, a receiving committee (Mr Sumeet Ghai, representing the PCO) was waiting for us in uniform with an obvious, recognisable name placard for us.

With the traditional flower garland on our necks, our first steps in India started with a short introduction about the Congress site during our escort from the airport. The Congress venue – “The EXPO Centre” - is being organised in one of the greatest satellite areas of New Delhi, NOIDA. It is connected to the airport by a new four lane expressway and took approximately 50 minutes to get there. This journey may be longer, depending on traffic conditions, but as the majority of international flights arrive during the night or early morning, most transfers should be quick and comfortable. All Congress participants who register and book their accommodation through the official website will be escorted to their hotels and the price of transportation to and from the hotel is included in the registration fee.

Hotels of different categories are all located very close to the Congress venue (5-10 minutes by bus). The choice of hotels varies from the luxurious five star exclusive hotel, located in the middle of a world famous 19 hole golf course where all the famous Formula 1 drivers were accommodated during the Indian Grand Prix, to the traditional “old English club style” hotel and 2/3/4 bedroom apartments in a huge sports complex of a dozen tennis courts, 6 basketball, 6 squash and 12 badminton courts and an Olympic standard swimming and diving pool. Budget accommodation is also available, well-equipped with facilities such as Wi-Fi and fitness rooms. These hotels will be connected with frequent shuttles each morning and at the end of the each day’s programme, along with routine shuttles every 20 minutes throughout the day.
Our first evening was spent in very nice green surrounds where a fantastic Indian dinner helped us to overcome our jetlag. The weather was pleasant with a maximum temperature of 24°C and an evening temperature around 18°.

The next day we visited the impressive Congress venue, joined by Dr Santosh Rath (Scientific Committee Chairman) and Dr Rakesh Khazanchi (local Organising Secretary). All arrangements were made by the local PCO and, in spite of this falling on the traditional Hindu holiday: “the Holy”, we were received promptly by all the professional staff of the complex. The venue has facilities to host events with more than 5000 participants and hundreds of exhibitors, and with endless variations. Dr Sabapathy has been working with one of the most famous Indian architects, specialised in building hospitals and cultural objectives, and we were presented with the virtual plan of the congress’ interior design - a plenary hall with more than 1500 seats and 8 other lecture halls (150-350 seats) to accommodate the scientific lectures and workshops. A huge area will accommodate exhibitor booths and an impressive space for posters is also integrated.

The scientific program was discussed and the detail of the plenary lectures, common sessions with the hand therapists, invited lectures, free paper presentations, topics of high interest and several other well designed plans and ideas have proved that the organizers have already done the most important part of the planning. Thirty work stations will be available nearby for speakers to preview their slides and free wireless internet will be provided throughout the Congress.

A welcome reception is planned on Monday (4th March) and a “free for everybody” President’s Dinner on Tuesday. Wednesday afternoon is for leisure, offering the possibility of a Delhi tour, some sport or a relaxing afternoon by the swimming pool.

Participants can say “goodbye” to standard lunch boxes and instead receive gourmet Indian food options each day. This will be offered with ample seating for all who would like to enjoy their lunches with friendly discussions.

The accompanying persons will have the opportunity to visit the fair of national handicrafts, within the same Congress venue, and also enjoy a good cup of Indian tea or coffee.

The Congress will end Friday afternoon (8th March) offering the possibility for another relaxing afternoon and time to prepare for the Taj Mahal /Agra guided post congress tour on Saturday.

The social programme offers a great variety of pre- and post-congress tours, tailored to your own needs if required, and the PCO is renowned for its travel agency with good value tours. We tried two tours, the first being a half day Old Delhi tour with a rickshaw ride through the great market’s narrow, crowded streets - an unforgettable experience for all the senses: the smells, tastes, sights and sounds of this unequivocal experience give the real “India feeling”. Prior to the rickshaw tour we visited the Jamma Masjid and enjoyed its architecture. The second tour was the one-day supposed “Taj Mahal” tour. After an Indian breakfast with different breads, spicy sauces and chutneys, and in the comfort of an air conditioned modern bus we drove along a new expressway to Agra, the ancient capital of India (180 km, 2.5 hours). I do not wish, nor dare, to describe the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort. All I will say is that for anyone travelling to India this is a “MUST”.
The tour, with a comfortable modern bus, an English-speaking guide (or German, Spanish, French or Japanese on request), all entries, an Indian buffet lunch in a 5 star hotel restaurant, plus more, was only 100 USD. It is not even worth contemplating whether to attend or not!

In conclusion, in my role as IFSSH Secretary-General, and also as an organiser of a previous IFSSH Congress, I highly recommend participation in this IFSSH&IFSHT Congress. The venue, accommodation, transportation, social programmes and, most importantly, the planned scientific programme are in the great hands of Raja Sabapathy and his enthusiastic team. The “almost everything is included” basis of the event, combined with early registration and flight bookings, provides reassurance of a financially affordable, excellent value event.

After the sights, tastes and experiences of this visit, I add two comments:

1. Bring your family with you and ask for the “Sabapathy package”:
   Arrival Sunday (3rd March), hotel accommodation close to the sports complex, congress attendance, two half day tours (Old Delhi and New Delhi) for the accompanying person, a post congress Taj Mahal /Agra tour on Saturday 9th, and an early morning departure on Sunday 10th. You may find the inclusion of a Saturday night stay within your India trip reduces the airfare, and you are still home in your bed by Sunday evening.

2. I am convinced that the local organisers, in the wonderful setting of India, are preparing and providing almost everything for the Congress’ success. Safety and quality in every aspect is assured. They need only one thing to succeed: this is your participation.

It is a MUST to come and see “Incredible India” in March 2013!

2012 Delegates’ Council Meeting

The 2012 Delegates’ Council Meeting was held in Antwerp, Belgium, in June. A full report of proceedings will be available on the IFSSH website (www.ifssh.info) and presented in the next IFSSH newsletter.

Zsolt Szabo
Secretary General, IFSSH
Email: secretary@ifssh.info