



First online Asia Boating Dialogue a success

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Today's event offered considerable market information to the 170 delegates in attendance

The first session of Asia Boating Dialogue (ABD) supported by *IBI* which ran today (22 September) provided 170 delegates from across the globe with a vast amount of market information. The organisers successfully navigated the technical problems of running an online event with the moderator, ICOMIA secretary general Udo Klienitz, based in London, organisers YP Loke in Singapore and Lawrence Chow in Hong Kong, and presenters based across the South East Asia region contributing a seamless online event.

YP Loke, who was behind the original ABD concept and drove the event to become online, commented to *IBI* after the event: "I think that today's event has proved that the industry in Asia can still get together despite the current Covid-19 crisis. Indeed, our attendance was larger than if we had been running the event as we usually do alongside the annual Singapore Yacht Show. While delegates miss out on the social networking that normally takes place during and on the sidelines of ABD, I think that we have proved that online has a definite place in linking the industry, especially where we have large distances to contend with as across Asia. We look forward to more delegates attending the next part of the ABD on the 29th of September."

Today's event comprised presentations from seven countries across South East Asia. Key outputs from the presentations were:

- India – India Marine Federation chairman Aashim Mongia presented a positive long-term outlook for India with its growing economy and middle class and a recent drive by the government to attract tourism, including the building of marinas to add to the one existing marina in Cochin. New marina projects Mongia identified that will proceed shortly are in Mumbai Port and the Andaman Islands. Other growth areas are in yacht and boat charter. Restrictions are a 63% tax on imported leisure boats which has restricted growth in the boat population, which currently Mongia estimates at 1,400 across the country.

- Sri Lanka – Gamini Herath from the Boatbuilding Industry Training Board which represents the Industry as an MIA and ICOMIA member painted the picture for Sri Lanka with the good news that Sri Lanka has managed to contain Covid-19 cases and deaths well, but at the expense of virtually closing the borders and the tourist market. The government has always been supportive of the marine industry and has established a new Ministry to encourage the development of the recreational boating industry. New marinas are in the developmental stage in Colombo and other parts of the island.
- Indonesia – Robert Engels who has been in Indonesia for 20 years painted the current picture of the industry in Indonesia and confirmed that there is a strong government agenda to help the boating sector, especially where growing marine tourism is concerned. With 17,000 islands, marine transportation is still a key factor. Other strengths relate to the relaxation of rules for visiting yachts and a year-round boating season. Engels also identified the growth in tourism to small islands and the use of boats to ensure isolation during the Covid-19 crisis. Weaknesses include high boat taxation and high levels of bureaucracy.
- Singapore – Singapore Boating Industry Association member Darren Oh highlighted the strengths of the market in Singapore, a good network of secure marinas, very high number of high net worth individuals, low taxes on boating, year-round boating season and the key regional Singapore Yacht Show. Weaknesses identified included restricted cruising grounds, low government recognition and over promotion of boating as an elitist and expensive activity. On a positive note, Singapore like other Asian capitals has seen a boom in boating and boat sales post lockdown during the Covid-19 crisis.
- Malaysia – Presented by William Quah from the Association of Marine Industries of Malaysia (AMIN). The strengths of the Malaysian boating market were identified in the presentation as low taxation and regulations for an industry which is one of the least regulated boating markets in the world. Lack of skill levels for service, confusing CIQP regulations and the shortage of marina berths are the key weaknesses while there are considerable opportunities to improve the marina capacity and service standards.
- Thailand – Peter Jackops from the Thai Yacht and Boating Industry Association (TYBA) which has 43 members showed a breakdown of the industry in terms of turnover which identified boat sales and maintenance and support providing nearly 50%. The country has a total berthing capacity of 1,814 split between the east and west coasts. A key problem identified is the high fatal accident rate for boats in the large marine tourism sector due to poor maintenance and low crew standards.
- Philippines – The last market considered by today's dialogue was presented by Apa Ongpin from the Federation of Philippines Marine Industries. Currently there are considerable travel restrictions with public transport largely shut down although they vary across the country. This has resulted in the boating market, largely tourism-driven, having very little activity. There are 15 boat manufacturers in

the country who manufactured 100 units in 2019, almost all boats are constructed in fibreglass and are outboard-powered. There are six major boat dealers with a forecast for growth in sales in 2020.

After a successful event, moderator Udo Kleinitz commented: “It has been great how everyone has come together across the globe for this online event. We have proved that the industry is maintaining resilience in difficult times with the Asia market doing well with increased boat sales and charter opportunities.”