



# The Earth is a Huge Planet, but a Small World — So IAQA is Globalizing

## IAQA International Ambassador Derrick A. Denis reports on his visits to India and Singapore

The importance of a healthful indoor environment is not solely a domestic issue. All over the world humans are living, working and playing inside buildings. Depending on your latitude and longitude, the indoor environments you encounter can range from similar to a domestic structure to far more deleterious than your average domestic structure.

No matter the address, the Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQA) mission of *“bringing practitioners together to prevent and solve indoor environmental problems for the benefit of customers and the public”* is a noble and universal goal. The IAQA has always attracted and welcomed international participation in membership, annual meeting attendance, webinars, IAQA University courses, and more. But recently IAQA’s global reach has amplified.

As part of achieving this mission globally, the IAQA is spreading its wings. In case you haven’t heard the exciting news, the IAQA has seven international chapters: Vancouver, Canada; Toronto, Canada; Shanghai, China; Singapore, Australia; India; and Panama. These chapters are growing, thriving and achieving the IAQA mission abroad.

Recently, it was my honor to be appointed by the IAQA Board of Directors as the IAQA International Ambassador to represent IAQA by visiting two of our young international chapters: India and Singapore. I am indebted to the local chapter leadership in both locations for welcoming me with open arms and for ensuring my brief time in each country was well spent.

### Singapore Recap



With IAQA Singapore Chapter Director Mitesh Kumar.

The IAQA Singapore Chapter is spearheaded by Chapter Director Mitesh Kumar. His dedicated leadership team includes Vice Chapter Director Kris Tan, Chapter Secretary Edison Ng, Chapter Treasurer Jerry Tey, Marketing & Publicity Chair Bo Xiong Fabian Lim, Education & Knowledge Transfer Chair Yoon Loong Hew, Events & Logistics Chair Yifei Wu, Membership Development Chair Ray Foo, and Grassroots & Government Affairs Chair Syed Mubarak Bin Subukutheen. Mitesh and his team were gracious and eager hosts.

I delivered two technical presentations at an IAQA Singapore Chapter workshop, which was held at the



*With some of the attendees at the Singapore Chapter workshop where I gave two technical presentations.*

Temasek Polytechnic School of Engineering. Topics included “Common Indoor Environmental Quality Issues” and “High-Yield IEQ Assessment Strategies.” There were many unfamiliar faces in attendance, but surprisingly there were many familiar faces, since several Singapore IAQA members make the trip each year to the IAQA Annual Meeting.

In addition to education, several Singapore IAQA Chapter leaders and I were invited to meet with representatives of the Environmental Sustainability Group of the Singapore Building and Construction Authority (BCA).

I found Singapore to be ultramodern in appearance and filled with all the diversity modern Asia has to offer. The buildings throughout this densely populated sovereign city-state are numerous, bright, shiny and new. But the built environments look to be historically focused on energy efficiency and aesthetics, with indoor environmental quality taking a back seat. Based on my observations and discussions with state officials and local IAQA members, the focus is now shifting to improving and maintaining a good indoor environment. There are opportunities for education, certification, product sales, assessment, design, and more.

### **India Recap**

IAQA’s India Chapter is just over one year old, but has a powerful nucleus. It is spearheaded by Chapter Director Richie Mittal, and is supported by the leadership team of Vice Chapter Director Krishnan Viswanath, Chapter Treasurer Barun Aggarwal, and Membership Development Chair Ashu Gupta.

IAQA participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> annual ACREX India 2018 event that took place in Bengaluru (previously Bangalore). What is Acrex India? Organized by the Indian Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE), ACREX India is an international exhibition on air conditioning, refrigeration and building services. The event includes various technical workshops, lectures on selected subjects, and an enormous exhibit hall encompassing multiple structures. The reach of this event is global, with many countries represented, including the US, UK, China, Canada, UAE, Czech Republic, Turkey, Thailand, Taiwan, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, South Korea, Singapore, Russia, Malaysia, Japan, Italy, Israel, Hong Kong, Germany, France, and Denmark. The three-day event welcomed about 600 exhibitors and 50,000 visitors.

IAQA Chapter Director Richie Mittal was instrumental in coordinating IAQA’s involvement in the ACREX event. IAQA had an exhibit hall booth and a networking area called an “IAQA Pavilion” with tables and charging areas for use by IAQA members and other attendees. This IAQA pavilion was graciously sponsored by Aeropure. IAQA members and prospective members attended a “Meet the IAQA Ambassador” event at which there were enthusiastic discussions regarding the IAQA and the IEQ industry in India.

Humbly, I was designated as an honored guest at various ceremonies associated with the event, such as the Curtain Raiser, Awards Banquet, and Partners Luncheon. I was asked to contribute to the event organizer’s publication (ISHRAE’s *ACRO News*). I even participated in various ribbon cuttings and product unveilings. I presented a technical presentation that included two segments. The first segment was entitled “What is IAQA” and included an introduction to the history, mission, member benefits, and how to get involved in the IAQA. The second presentation, entitled “Common



*Presenting on Common IAQ Issues at Acrex India 2018.*

Indoor Environment Quality Issues Impacting Structures," included a primer on a wide variety of indoor environmental issues associated with the built environment. It covered defining both good IEQ and sick building syndrome, and offered strategies to prevent, assess and respond to both point and nonpoint sources of indoor pollution. I met many new friends. Unexpectedly, I saw many familiar faces, since several India IAQA member present have journeyed to attend past IAQA Annual Meetings and/or the collocated ASHRAE Annual Meetings.

The India Chapter of the IAQA and the local members of the association are hard at work achieving the IAQA mission. The IAQA India Chapter is jointly working with the relevant authorities and associate societies (such as ISHRAE) to promote IEQ awareness and solutions to the public at large.

I found the Indian people enthusiastic to make their country and its citizens prosperous and safe. But, I noted that India has a great amount of room for improvement in the health and safety front, the indoor air quality front, and the outdoor air quality front. I witnessed people riding atop cars, construction workers with no shoes, exposed electrical in public spaces, and much more; and I observed a lack of basic sanitation and aseptic techniques as simple as trash management and hand washing. These were painful sights for a 25-year veteran of the US health and safety profession. These surprising and upsetting observations were sprinkled among modern buildings, smart phones, air conditioners, and supercars. There is room in India for growth in the infrastructure space, laboratory space, safety product space, instrumentation space, design space, assessment space, education space, and more. My trip to India further convinced me the knowledge and experience of current IAQA members can have dramatic, immediate and positive impacts in India.

### **In Closing**

This first-hand visit to Singapore and India reinforced my suspicion that the indoor environmental quality (IEQ) and environmental health and safety (EH&S) industries are not mature in the locations of our international chapters. My suspicion that there are opportunities abroad for corroboration and business development was confirmed.

This IAQA Ambassador recommends the IAQA leadership and members-at-large make a concerted effort to reach both inward and outward to our international colleagues. We should reach outward by supporting our fledgling international chapters, promoting the IAQA to international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and spreading the principles of designing, maintaining and troubleshooting good indoor environments abroad. We should reach inward by welcoming, honoring and promoting our existing international IAQA members and event attendees.

Finally, the cultural differences between the US, India and Singapore are undeniable and intriguing, but our commonalities are immeasurably greater. We human beings are all looking to make a better life for our children and for our neighbors. The same holds true for the built environments in each country. There are notable differences in building designs, materials and functionality, but we are all trying to construct indoor spaces that shelter us from harm and don't harm us in the process. We all benefit from improving indoor spaces. We all can benefit from the IAQA.