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Beyond China and India: Future development hubs identified by real estate experts

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Shanghai and Bangalore are well-known international development hotspots, but expert panelists at the CoreNet Global Summit, meeting, identified the up-and-coming cities that are expected to be the economic hubs of the future.

In a session called, "Around the World in 90 Minutes," panelists picked dozens of cities in Asia, Europe and the Americas that offer a business climate making them ripe for development by growing companies. Over 300 attendees attended the session, part of the corporate real estate and workplace association's fall summit meeting.

When selecting European locations for manufacturing centers or Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) offices, RenÃ© Buck, president of Buck Consultants Int'l., advises companies to look for three differentiators before citing a new European facility; talent, technology and connectivity.

Buck, whose firm is one of Europe's leading independent location consulting companies, said emerging business centers like Glasgow/Edinburgh, Scotland and Istanbul, Turkey are among Europe's brightest future development stars. But he added that Sofia, Bulgaria is, "on the rise and will attract a lot of new companies."

An Asia expert, Dennis Meseroll, director of Tractus Asia Limited, said companies should look to second and third tier cities that he calls sleepers," which include Chengdu, China, Orissa, India as well as Ho Chi Minh City/Hanoi, Vietnam.

Despite the attractiveness of exotic new Asian and Eastern European markets, Dennis Donovan, principal of Wadley-Donovan-Gutshaw Consulting, said North, Central and South America, "continues to be very strong," for outsourced call centers and manufacturing centers.

Donovan, a renowned site selection expert, calls places ranging from Dickinson, North Dakota, to Hermosillo, Mexico to Santiago, Chile, among the hottest future investment hotspots in the Western Hemisphere.

Despite obvious upsides, like a well-trained labor market or relatively low wages, the panelists all warned companies about to plunge into new markets to avoid pitfalls, such as:

- * Herd mentality
- * Making location decisions on country-level data
- * Relying on secondary data
- * Regulatory change, and others

A recent CoreNet location decision survey indicated that North America remains the market of choice, followed by emerging markets such as Eastern Europe and Asia.

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