

BAE Systems signs up for Bridex

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BRUNEI'S second defence show, Bridex 2009, has clinched the participation of Britain's BAE Systems, one of the world's leading land, sea and air defence company.

"I think Brunei's defence industry is developing. It can grow; the way we would like to see in Brunei is the indigenous capability, which we are keen on partnering and developing. We believe there is opportunity and potential here," said Micheal Bentinck, vice-president of BAE Systems Brunei, adding it can come in the form of investments or joint venture arrangements.

In an interview with The Brunei Times, he said the first-class location for Bridex 2009 at the Empire Hotel and Country Club is an impeccable venue for foreign delegates and exhibitors to experience whilst the organiser, Royal Brunei Technical Services (RBTS) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the exhibition is well-run.

"I hear it will be bigger and it will be a big challenge for the organisers. As you know, there are a number of exhibitions around the world all competing with each other for delegation and exhibitors, so it will be a big challenge for RBTS, because with any exhibition you need the balance and the right timing during the year so it does not clash with the other exhibitions," he said.

He said the organisers also had to consider the location, catering, accommodation and transport.

BAE Systems also participated in Brunei's first defence exhibition last year whereby Bentinck, as well as other companies touted the outcome of Bridex 2007.

For next year's show, he said: "I think there's a lot (of participants) that invest a lot of money and time to bring in their people and their equipment. Their key priority is to see their customers. They are also very keen to show what they have to the public, because the public has an interest, but you have to get the right balance in terms of the number of days.

"If you look at exhibitions around the world, they can last up to five to seven days. From past experiences you have one or two public days, you need to balance," he said.

Among other expectations from Bridex 2009 is the quality of delegations.

"Now that you have established it once ... you have to make sure you bring in more delegation, more seniority ... ensuring that each delegation has an allocated time to visit each of the exhibitors," he said.

BAE Systems has a number of regional offices including Brunei primarily for business development and opportunities including training initiatives to develop local skills.

BAE Systems has carried out such initiatives in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, developing their defence industry to meet international standards.

In Brunei, "with the right training and good quality graduates and there are a lot of well-trained ex-armed forces personnel where their skills can be passed onto the younger graduates" the country will be able to help boost the defence industry, Bentinck said.

BAE Systems is the third largest aerospace and defence company in the world employing about 96,000 people around the world. It currently has six home markets: the US, UK, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Sweden and South Africa.

In Brunei, BAE Systems works closely with The Ministry of Defence and the Royal Brunei Technical Services.

Last year, Dato Paduka Mustappa Sirat, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, said Brunei's defence-related industries hold the potential to be the Sultanate's biggest contributor to economic development outside of the oil and gas sector in the coming years.

Last month, The Brunei Times reported that Bridex 2009 is attracting major global defence players.

Among major companies, which have shown interest are ST Engineering, Harris Corporation, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman and Thales.

To be held on August 11-16, 2009, Bridex 2009 targets to gather 250 exhibitors from 30 countries. It will be the first of its kind regionally, with focus on air, land and marine defence and home land security in the Asia-Pacific.

The exhibition will cover about 15,000 sq metres of exhibition space.

Bridex 2009 will provide a venue for defence officials, industrialists, researchers and policy makers to interact and witness the latest developments in defence technology.

It will also offer a bigger platform and greater opportunity for all players in the defence industry to network.

Source: The Brunei Times