

Bridex 2009: Brunei to invite 700 foreign and domestic participants

Waleed PD Mahdini
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

Friday, December 7, 2007

SOME 700 participants, both foreign and domestic, will be invited by the Ministry of Defence to attend and participate in the sultanate's upcoming Brunei Darussalam International Defence Exhibition (Bridex) come 2009.

"The first Bridex attracted just over 100 participants from 14 countries but as we will be tapping into World Aerospace's network of contacts and experience, we are aiming for a much higher number than that for our second defence exhibition," revealed the acting Chairman of the Bridex committee, Dato Paduka Hj Mustappa Hj Sirat, who is also the permanent secretary at the Prime Minister's Office.

Speaking to The Brunei Times during the five-day Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (Lima) over the week, following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between His Majesty's Government and the Malaysian event organisers, Dato Hj Mustappa explained that "World Aerospace sent out 700 invitations to defence industries, out of which 300 came. For Bridex 2009, we will be inviting 700 participants too."

The first Bridex was hailed as a resounding success because it successfully attracted over 500 international visitors during its first attempt. Furthermore, it also raked in between \$3 million to \$5 million for the support industry.

"The economic spin-off from Bridex is huge," commented the permanent secretary. "From airlines, hotels, transportation, tourism and other support industries ... The real value is drawing in the exhibitors to participate in Bridex 2009."

It may seem, however, that Bridex has some of its work cut out for it. The Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources is now embarking on a nationwide campaign to generate and increase the level of local awareness and potential of Brunei's tourism industry, namely through the "Kenali Negara Kitani" programme. "Everyone should also help to prepare the country for Bridex 2009," emphasised Dato Hj Mustappa further. Other than Bridex 2009, the sultanate is also gearing up to host a number of other big world events towards the end of the decade — such as the International Federation of Non-Government Organisations for the Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse in 2009 as well as the Asean Summit in 2010.

Brunei could soon see itself reaping the rewards as a meeting, investment, conference and exhibition (MICE) destination from its advantageous positioning as a stable and peaceful country.

During Bridex 2007, Brunei secured between \$40 million to \$50 million in sales, such as the acquisition of the Ultimax light machine-guns and others. On the whole, it amassed hundreds of millions of dollars for other participants," explained the former permanent secretary of defence, adding that "the combat network radio tender was also as a direct result of Bridex 2007 and "that's why the companies participated."

Source: The Brunei Times