

Bridex 2009 to provide more opportunities

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LOCAL defence companies are looking forward to play a more significant role the upcoming Brunei Darussalam International Defence Exhibition (Bridex) in 2009, which is expected to be a much bigger affair than the inaugural one held in May this year.

Not only are they keen and ready to heed the call by the Ministry of Defence to pitch in their support to establish and develop a local defence capability, but they are also looking forward to the timely start-up of a vital strategic sector of national growth.

A local company which provides defence and electronic security-related services pointed out that domestic players in the sultanate's nascent defence industry will play a significant role in the next Bridex if the opportunities given are made full use of.

"The response to the first Bridex was good. We are looking forward to the next one, which I believe will be better. The feeling is good," said the company's managing director, who declined to be named.

However, some local companies felt their participation in the previous Bridex was overshadowed by the bigger, major players in the defence industry and that further improvements need to be made to ensure local companies gain a fair share of the benefits.

"There were positive comments on the previous Bridex, but from my point of view, the local side didn't reap as much benefits as they should have. The big, major companies stole the limelight. What does that make us? Spectators?" said an individual involved in liaison duties for the Bridex 2007.

An employee of one of the leading defence-related companies lamented the lack of networking between companies, especially the local ones. She also felt that there was not enough participation in the previous Bridex, having been to other defence exhibitions in Malaysia and Singapore.

"There wasn't much awareness created for Bridex 2007 either. Public reception was great though, they were interested in the helicopters and the military equipment. But from a business perspective, there was not much information on who was representing who," she said.

"For the next one though, they are doing the right thing by inviting as many people as they can."

The Ministry of Defence will be inviting some 700 participants through the network of contacts and experience of World Aerospace, which it signed an agreement with during the recent Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (Lima) to organise Bridex 2009.

But the Royal Brunei Technical Services, a co-organisers of the defence exhibition, has acknowledged that there is much that needs to be prepared. For example, the first Bridex attracted just over 100 exhibitors and participants, which saw the International Convention Centre filled to capacity. With an already expected larger turn-out for the second defence exhibition, the ICC may not be adequate to do the event justice. The Mahsuri International Convention Centre was purposefully designed and built with the Langkawi defence exhibition in mind.

Source: The Brunei Times