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Malaysian firms have till Nov 30 to confirm

MALAYSIAN companies have until the end of November to confirm their participation in CeBIT, organisers of the show said. This is in spite of the fact that exhibition space for the upcoming CeBIT 1999, scheduled to be held from March 18 to 24 next year in Hannover, Germany, is already fully booked.

Explained Jorg Schomburg, managing director of Deutsche Messe AG, the available space comprised those that have been reserved for individual countries to ensure that the show has a fair international representation.

He said most countries have fully taken up their allocated spaces but much of the space "blocked" for Malaysian exhibitors is still available. If the space is unfilled by November 30, it will be released to firms on the waiting list.

Since 1997, when Malaysia had its largest participation at CeBIT with 18 exhibitors, the numbers started dwindling. It went down to 13 this year when, in March, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad paid a visit to the annual showcase. For next year, a total of 10 exhibitors are expected to participate.

So far, only the Sapura Group, Telekom Malaysia Bhd and telecommunication products maker Unico Technology Bhd, have confirmed their participation.

Several more have indicated interest but have not committed themselves. They include a handful of handphone accessory and component suppliers, and a couple of software houses, said C.Y. Fong, executive director of Edaran Anfas (M) Sdn Bhd, the show's local agent.

Fong said he felt that some Malaysian companies are holding back because of the economic slowdown. "They think that they should not go out in time of crisis.

"But that it is exactly what they should do. The domestic market is shrinking, so it is time to go out to grab the bigger markets," he said, adding that the IT and telecommunications market in Europe alone is estimated to worth US\$350 billion.

He said that on a per sq m basis and taking into consideration the top class services and facilities that the organisers provide to the exhibitors, CeBIT offers a very compelling proposition compared with local and regional trade shows.

He added that the value that they can derive from CeBIT is much better because it is a higher profile show that attracts the best and the brightest in the industry.

Furthermore, local small- and medium-sized technology companies that participate in trade shows such as CeBIT can apply for special government subsidies through the Small- and Medium-sized Industries Development Corporation, as well as claim double tax deduction for export promotion.

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