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Full of opportunities and sights

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EXPO OIC 2003, the first trade and bazaar exposition to be held in conjunction with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit, will open doors to many business networking for local and foreign entrepreneurs.

With 800 booths, sprawled over 20,000 sq metres of exhibition area at the Putrajaya exhibition centre, the expo is set to be a grand showcase.

To be held for six days, it will be officially open by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Considered as one of the largest event of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region, the expo is divided into two sections: a trade exposition and a bazaar.

F&R Exhibition and Conference Sdn Bhd executive director Datuk Rosle Jaamat said 600 exhibitors from 30 OIC countries such as Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Qatar, Brunei, Indonesia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Bangladesh had confirmed their participation, apart from countries whose participation was sponsored by the Islamic Development Bank, such as Azerbaijan, Senegal, Sudan, Mozambique and Yemen.

"We also have exhibitors from non-OIC countries such as China, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and France have also given their confirmation," he said.

He said being a major trade show, the expo would create business opportunities among exhibitors and visitors.

"I think that this is a business networking opportunity that should not be missed by local entrepreneurs.

"Just imagine being able to get into contact with potential business partners under one roof and they don't have to travel to all these countries, and with the long duration of event, many deals could be closed at the end of the day," he said.

He also said that the OIC countries market was still untapped, being a non-traditional market for Malaysian businesses.

"Thus, the opportunity is vast and businessmen should grab this opportunity to meet some of them at the expo," he said.

It is expected to attract 5,000 international traders, 100,000 local traders and public visitors.

Visitors will be able to see exhibits on architecture, philosophy, trade, science, calligraphy, medicine, education and heavy industry.

He said local companies such as Petronas, Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd (Proton), Elitkraf, Arus Andaman, AIN Medicare, Bateel Asia, Innovation Associates, Dawama, 26 institutions of higher learning and the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry had confirmed their participation.

Cultural and Islamic civilisation artifacts of over 500 years and the Sultan of Brunei's personal collection will be among the attractions.

At the bazaar, visitors can buy items such as handicraft, souvenirs, food and beverage.

Visitors can see and buy the works of Muslim photographer Abdul Al-Adheem, popularly known as Peter Sanders.

Sanders, who is famous for his photographs of places in Muslim countries including pictures of the Kaabah and Mecca, will showcase 50 of his works.

Visitors who come on the opening day may also get a chance to see two other prominent Western Muslims: Yusuf Islam and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson.

The two with Sanders, who will be attending a charity dinner organised in conjunction with the expo, will be at the expo to sell their books and CDs.

Apart from attraction of the expo and the beauty of Putrajaya, Rosle said the public should also take the opportunity to visit the expo because the organiser had made transportation to the place easy.

"For the whole duration of the expo, the Express Rail Link will offer a special fare of RM10 for a two-way trip from Kuala Lumpur Sentral to Putrajaya Station. And from the Putrajaya Station, a free shuttle service will also be made available to the exhibition centre," he said.

He said there would also be some 5,000 parking bays in the vicinity of the exhibition centre.

Amid the exhibition and business match-making, there will also be three conferences to be held concurrently over Oct 15 and 16.

The conference, organised by Islamic World Expo & Conference, will focus on three topics: health, education and E-government.

F&R Exhibition and Conference Sdn Bhd, which was established in 2000, deals in advertising and promotions, apart from events and exhibition managements.

Although considered new, the company has organised many exhibitions, among others, the Franchise International Malaysia 2002/2003 and Electronic Warfare Exhibition and Conference last year.

"We are honoured to have been given the task to organise this expo," he said. Next year, he said, the company was going to organise Malaysia International Textiles Exhibition in March, International Land Transport Technology in May and another Electronic Warfare.

"The 10th OIC Summit in Putrajaya is not only making history as the first to be held outside the Middle East but it is also the first summit to have a trade and bazaar exposition alongside the international gathering, and we are proud to be associated in the making of this history," he said.

Endorsed by Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation and Tourism Malaysia, the expo's main sponsors are Dinar Dirham International, Umrah.com, Takaful Ikhlas and Mecca Cola.

Its other official sponsors include Petronas as the official fuel sponsor, AmBank Group as the official bank, Telekom Malaysia Bhd as official communication provider, Malaysia Airlines as official airline, New Straits Times as the official newspaper, Malaysian Business as official publication and Channel Nine as official host broadcaster.

The expo is open to public from 10am to 6pm.