

# MICE sector grows by leaps and bounds

SHAREN KAUR

**THERE** is a build-up of convention centres and exhibition halls in Malaysia as the country shapes up to provide better venues for MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions), concerts and sporting events.

Malaysia Major Events (MME) general manager Tony Nagamaiah said MICE groups are a top priority in Malaysia, which is strategically located at the crossroads of Asia.

One of the biggest convention centres is the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, located in the city centre next to the Petronas Twin Towers.

Opened in 2005, it offers more than 74,000 sq ft of flexible function space, including 40,000-plus sq ft of exhibition space, 3,000-person capacity Plenary Hall and a grand ballroom for 2,000 guests.

The centre is undergoing expansion which will be completed by next year, adding another 32,800 sq ft of flexible space to the facility. Other major venues for events include the Matrade Exhibition & Convention Centre, the Putra World Trade Centre, Putrajaya International Convention Centre, Persada Johor International Convention Centre and Penang's Straits Quay Convention Centre.

The Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC), with one mil-

lion sq ft exhibition space built by Naza TTDI Sdn Bhd, will open soon.

Nagamaiah said Malaysia has improved by leaps and bounds in the MICE business and sporting events, positioning itself as a preferred destination in the Asian region.

This year, Malaysia will play host to the SEA Games and the Asean Para Games at the Bukit Jalil KL Sports City, which is currently being rejuvenated by Malaysian Resources Corp Bhd.

According to a Bernama report, the first phase of the rejuvenation work is 98 per cent completed.

"Malaysia is very active in sporting events. When it comes to meetings and conferences, Malaysia is very strong in the medical aspect. We have been hosting a lot of medical conferences with people attending

from around the world.

"For incentives, the biggest business comes from China, followed by India and South Korea. Incentive groups can range from 1,000 to 50,000 people and this is big business for the services industry," he told NST Property.

Nagamaiah said exhibition is a growing market but stressed that Malaysia is losing out to neighbouring countries, especially Thailand which has a huge manufacturing hub.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is a preferred destination when it comes to hosting exhibitions on health, beauty, jewellery,

railway and LIMA (Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition), he said.

"The main reason why we are losing out is because of exhibition space. Our existing convention centres and exhibition halls are not big enough.

"At the KL Convention Centre, you can move in trucks but for heavy duty vehicles, you need one floor space. We will be able to target more exhibitions provided there is a bigger space," he said.

Nagamaiah said with MITECH, Malaysia will be able to target more exhibitions and other major events.

MME, set up in 2010, is a division of Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCeb), an agency under the Tourism and Culture Ministry.

It focuses on identifying and supporting major event bids for sports, arts, lifestyle and entertainment, as well as assisting home-grown events.

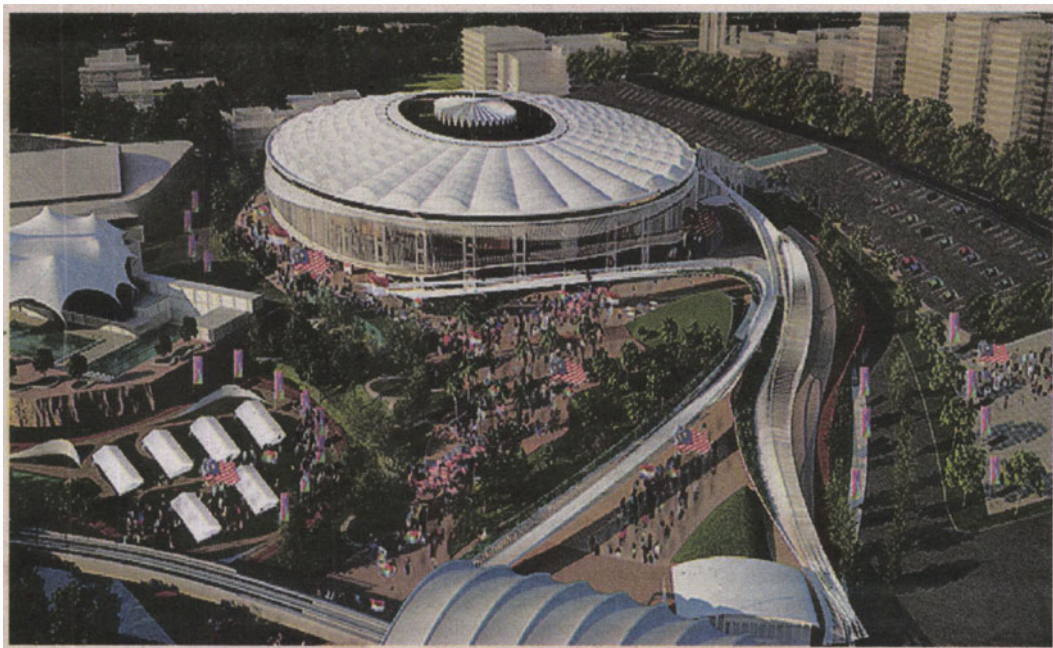
According to MyCeb, Malaysia played host to 65 associations and conventions, 28 exhibitions and 283 corporate meeting and incentive groups last year.

Nagamaiah said Malaysia is on the right track to drive positive momentum for the business events industry.

"We are bidding to host international events, ranging from sports to entertainment. Because of the current economic slowdown in world markets, the MICE business has reduced a little, so we are focusing in other areas where there is growth," he said.



Tony Nagamaiah



*Bukit Jalil Sports City.*