



Arabian Travel Mart ends with satisfaction

The 19th edition of the Arabian Travel Mart (ATM) ended last Thursday with industry stake holders expressing satisfaction of the event.

The stake holders were full of praise for the layout and the design of Sri Lanka which they said was one of the best. "Praise should go to the Sri Lankan embassy staff," they said.

However, one of the industries expressed dissatisfaction over the luke-warm manner in which the Ministry of Tourism acted with regard to sending representatives to the event. The Sri Lankan companies were highly critical of this aspect and said that the mindset that the officials who would be participating in this event is not coming on a joy ride, should go to the decision makers of the Ministry. "They are just trying to save Rs. 150,000 and deprive Sri Lanka of a golden opportunity

to get free mileage of around Rs 15 billion," was the view expressed by them.

However, SriLankan Airlines Chairman, Nishantha Wickramasinghe and CEO, Kapila Chandrasena participated at the Press conference and gained tremendous free mileage to both Mihin Lanka and SriLankan airlines.

This was the first time that Mihin Lanka marketed itself in a global event of this magnitude.

The four day event which saw a record 51 companies from Sri Lanka including over 20 'first times' saw a 7% increase in exhibitors with more than 21,000 square metres of floor space hosting over 2,400 exhibitors and 82 new companies. This increase is reflected in its international reach with 54 national pavilions and 87 countries represented overall.

ARABIAN TRAVEL MART



Shirajiv Sirimane in Dubai

"The trend that we witnessed in previous years, has continued with visitor pre-registration numbers substantially up, and eleven new destinations exhibiting including Moscow, Romania, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. ATM is always a timely reminder of the major contribution that

the travel and tourism industry plays in the regional economy," said Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions, and organizer of Arabian Travel Market.

According to Walsh, travel agent registration is up by a staggering 213% this year, with trade visitor pre-registration surging by 38% and Buyers Club by 35%.

"Reflecting the region's proactive approach to the tourism sector as a major economic drive and 18 months from the Arab Spring, we have seen a significant jump in interest from within the GCC, which is confirmed by the positive pre-show figures seen across the board," remarked Walsh.

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Some Sri Lankan companies are seen engaged in discussion with tour operators at the ATM, while tea is being served at the stand which was very popular among visitors.

Pix by Shirajiv Sirimane