

Setting the stage for 1st S'pore Airshow

Workers rush to prepare 30-ha site for 80,000 visitors in Feb

By DAVID BOY

A SMALL army of workers has descended on a section of Changi to lay the groundwork for the first Singapore Airshow, which will take off in just over a month.

Teams are working seven days a week to build exhibition stands, chalets and displays where over 900 of the world's top aviation and defence companies from 62 countries will roll out their wares from Feb 19.

The six-day show is expected to ring in a bonanza for hotels, restaurants and shops as aviation heavyweights pull out all the stops to woo potential clients.

The event will likely contribute about \$50 million in

spillovers to the economy, said Mr Jimmy Lim, managing director of Singapore Airshow & Events, which is organising Asia's biggest airshow.

Next month's event will be the 14th air show held here, but the first organised by Singapore Airshow & Events. The company is a joint venture between the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the Defence Science and Technology Agency.

Previous shows, which run every second year, were organised by London-based Reed Exhibitions under the Asian Aerospace brand name.

Mr Lim estimates that 30,000 industry insiders will attend the show, half of them from overseas.

The result: an estimated 30,000 more nights booked with hotels here.

Another 50,000 visitors are expected to wear out the carpet when the airshow is opened to the public for

the first two days. Tickets, which have to be bought in advance, cost \$20.

Aviation fans can expect to see precision flying displays by air forces from Australia and Singapore, and tour the inside of luxurious business jets.

Five conferences that will pull in top flight professionals from the aviation and defence sectors are expected to be among the biggest draws.

With the clock ticking towards opening day, contractor Pico Art International expects to double the number of workers at the show site to around 450, starting from the end of this month.

The show will take place on a 30-ha site at Changi North, which overlooks Pulau Tekong.

"This is the biggest event we're handling this year," said Mr Lim Kuo Meng, a manager who has been with Pico for 11 years.

The company began planning the show a year ago.

Already on order are more than 1,200 tables, some 4,000 chairs and hundreds of light fixtures to illuminate signboards and exhibits.

Outside the main exhibition hall, which is about the size of four soccer fields, 200 chalets are being built for exhibitors to host their guests.

As of yesterday, work on the 200 chalets was 70 per cent complete.

Mr Lim, who worked on his first airshow in 2002, said "My team feels a sense of achievement as we watch the show grow from a bare site to a huge event."

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ACCOMMODATION: Two hundred chalets are being custom-built for exhibitors at the airshow to host their guests. As of yesterday, 70 per cent of these chalets has been completed.



STEP BY STEP: Workers getting the exhibition hall ready: Teams are working seven days a week at the 30-ha site in Changi North.

Flying machines on show

WARPLANES, business jets, helicopters - 42 flying machines in all - will greet visitors to the first Singapore Airshow's static display area.

The twin-deck Airbus A380, the world's largest airliner by size and capacity, will also be on show there and in the air.

The 90-minute aerial display will see six planes and helicopters in action from 12.30pm between Feb 19 and 24.

Aerial aerobatics will be performed by the six-aircraft teams from the Royal Australian Air Force's Red Bull and the Republic of Singapore Air Force's Black Knights.

When it comes to the A380's turn to perform, visitors will see it being towed on a taxiway as wide as a six-lane road to the Changi Air Base runway, which is just outside the airshow site.

After take-off, it will perform low-level manoeuvres. On landing, it will again be seen being towed back to its berthing area.

Among the planes that will perform are jet trainers designed for air forces to train new pilots, such as the Aeroprakt M-346 from Italy and the T-50 Golden Eagle from South Korea.

Guests to be ferried in BMWs

BMW is the ride of choice at this year's Singapore Airshow, scheduled from Feb 19 to 24 at the newly completed Changi Exhibition Centre.

The German marque and its local agent Performance Motors will supply more than 300 cars to ferry guests and delegates.

The cars used will consist of 320i, 520i - re-introduced here specially for the event - and 730i.

As with all previous BMW sponsorships, the cars used will be sold to the public at "special" prices.

This time round, instead of trimming the price tag, Performance Motors has decided to offer higher trade-in amounts to customers.

This so-called overtrade amount will be \$8,000 for the 320i and 520i, and \$10,000 for the 730i.

If customers do not want this higher trade-in offer for their used vehicles, they can opt to effect the same amount in their monthly instalment payments.