

For Immediate Release



**MEDIA RELEASE
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**2008 CONVENTION RESULTS
A BOOST FOR SARAWAK**

With the global economic slowdown already impacting on visitor arrivals and predictions of doom and gloom across most business sectors, there is some good news on the horizon for Malaysia's meetings industry with the Sarawak Convention Bureau reporting a year end bid success ratio of 68 per cent securing 28 new conventions for Sarawak. These events are expected to deliver 51,000 delegate days and over RM 35 million in direct delegate expenditure at conventions to be held over the next three years.

Major conventions and exhibitions scheduled for next year include the 8th World Congress on Engineering Education, Malaysian Sterile Services Association Conference & Exhibition, District 51 Toastmasters International Convention, Malaysian Association of Orthodontists Scientific Conference and the 11th National Congress of Tailor's Guilds Malaysia.

2009 will also see the mid year opening of the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching situated on the Kuching Isthmus. Conventions confirmed for the new Centre include the International Energy Week Expo from 3 - 5 November, the 3rd Asia International Conference on Water Resources & Renewable Energy and the Australian Universities International Alumni Convention in 2010.

Two new Kuching hotels will be opening next year adding in excess of 800 new rooms to the City. The Four Points Sheraton is nearing completion and will open in January with the Novotel Interhill due to open later in the year.

The Bureau is currently working on fifteen new bid opportunities for potential national and international conventions. Having strong forward bookings for Association conferences is an important stabilizing factor in turbulent economic times as associations have a constitutional requirement to meet. This means their conventions usually proceed albeit with reduced delegate numbers unlike corporate meeting business which is more volatile.

Sarawak's international profile in the meetings industry has also received a major boost with the Bureau's four minute video commercial - Recharge in a new world - Sarawak, Borneo winning three major international tourism awards generating excellent media exposure throughout the year.

To cap off an impressive year's performance, the world's meeting industry voted Sarawak's marketing campaign "Harnessing the power of story telling to launch a new meetings destination" the winner of the 2008 ICCA Best Marketing Award. The Marketing Award - a first for Malaysia - was presented at the International Convention and Congress Association (ICCA) General Assembly in Victoria, Canada in November.

However, the Bureau is not resting on its laurels and the Bureau's Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Jill Henry commented: "While we are celebrating our success, there is still much more to be done. As a Bureau, we are better known overseas than within Malaysia at the moment and we need to promote the value of conventions at home to encourage more Malaysians to actively participate in their respective International Associations."

Next year the Bureau will focus on Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in a concerted push for more national and regional meetings.

The 2008 "Anak Sarawak" Appreciation Awards held in Kuching and Kuala Lumpur recently honored 19 recipients who have successfully bid for new national or international conventions for Sarawak. The annual awards acknowledge their commitment and dedication to the growth of Sarawak's MICE industry.

The Sarawak Convention Bureau is a non profit company established by the State Government in May 2006 to attract more conventions to Sarawak. The Bureau's services are provided free of charge to meeting planners and include assistance with bids for conventions, marketing and delegate boosting services.

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