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The 'ultimate air show'



● Bahrain Royal Air Force Hawk F-16s ... show spectacular

Bahrain hosts "the ultimate air show" next month in an event expected to attract thousands of buyers and spectators from all over the world.

The first Bahrain International Air Show (BIAS) will take place from January 21 and 23, at the Sakhir Air Base – perhaps the best known of His Majesty King Hamad.

It is being staged in partnership with the organisers of Britain's Farnborough International Air Show – perhaps the best known event of its kind in the world.

The show will feature everything from fighter planes to corporate jets, from helicopters to massive airliners – promising a spectacular event for buyers and spectators.

It will include "test flights" for clients in a specially-allocated air corridor.

Bahrain clinched the deal with Farnborough International Limited (FIL) in July last year to

stage a world-class show, under the wing of Civil Aviation Affairs (CAA).

It will feature daily displays of flying from some of the biggest names in the aviation industry.

Those taking part include Boeing, Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems, TAG Aeronautics, Bell Helicopter Textron, Cessna, Gulfstream, Sikorsky, Bell Trexton, Gulf Aviation Technologies, Bahrain Air and more – including the event's official carrier Gulf Air, which is planning daily flypasts.

The Royal Bahrain Air Force hopes to demonstrate its Hawk, F5 fighter and Fight-16 Fighting Falcon.

The US Navy is also reportedly planning to display its F-18 Super Hornets and SH60 Seahawk, while Sikorsky will show off its H92 Superhawk.

An air show 'city' is being built for exhibitors,

VIP guests and buyers, for a show at which deals could be done worth well into the billions of dollars.

As an indicator, the 2008 Farnborough show, which is held every two years, saw a record-breaking \$88.7 bn worth of orders announced.

But while big business is being done, there will also be plenty of thrills for spectators, with the show open to adults and children on all three days.

There will be organised children's activities and attractions, including a traditional heritage village to explore, local arts and crafts demonstrations to enjoy, plus music and other entertainment.

"We believe this event will be as impressive an opportunity for businesses in Bahrain as the Formula One Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit," said Civil Aviation Affairs (CAA) aviation advisor Graham Mackie.

"There are a number of international air shows around the world, such as Farnborough, Singapore, Dubai and Paris.

"This proposition was developed by a team from Farnborough through market research with existing clients in the aerospace industry and what they asked was: 'If you had another, what would be an ideal event?'"

"They spoke of a high-level trade event with exclusive business-to-business opportunities, access to the right people, a five-star environment and whilst they understand the public need to be involved in a show, they would prefer to have the public in a separate end.

"We have now put together what we believe is the ultimate air show experience."

Construction has been underway at the venue since March and involves the completion of 40 corporate hospitality business chalets, a VIP pavilion, a media centre, a restaurant, a royal suite for VIP guests and a public aircraft viewing area.

The event is being specifically geared towards an exclusive market - offering a unique opportunity for potential customers to "test-drive" the equipment on show.

"It's under royal patronage, it will be a three-day exclusive trade event and it will focus on all sectors of the aerospace industry: civil, commercial and defence," added Mr Mackie.

"It will offer an impressive platform for demonstrations and, in particular, it will offer companies the opportunity to take their customers flying.

"We have allocated a specific area of Bahrain air space and a route down the Gulf for customers to be taken flying. This doesn't happen at most air shows around the world.

"We're going to give access to very high level delegations. His Majesty King Hamad's very own VIP pavilion will host up to 200 guests every day.

"There will be an opportunity for exhibitors to mingle with these guests on a programme basis."

Organisers expect the event to inject up to \$13 million (BD4.9m) into the local economy through spending by participants and visitors, as well as the use of local suppliers and workers

The event features a purpose-built hospitality chalet complex, with private individual units to purchase, which overlook the air base runway.

Access may also be granted to the Royal Pavilion for exclusive one-to-one introductions to official delegations and invited guests.

CAA has awarded GAC Bahrain the freight forwarding contract for the show, handling a huge amount of cargo arriving by air and sea from all over the world.

The show will offer a totally new concept to the global aerospace community and provide unique business opportunities to its 40 participants, say officials.

"Bahrain is acknowledged as a pioneer of aerospace business in the region.

With significant opportunities in the civil, defence and business aviation markets, this event will further enhance its reputation as a preferred

destination for major global businesses," said GAC Bahrain managing director Peter Gronberg.

As FIL continues with its rapid development of the site, the event is in the advanced stages of planning featuring as one of its biggest incentives a comprehensive delegations programme.

The format of the launch event - which will comprise a chalet complex of only 40 units and no exhibition halls - will be five-star luxury and exclusivity throughout; a high level corporate hospitality platform for business-to-business networking.

"It is not surprising given the many challenges in the current global financial climate, that major players from the aerospace industry are now more keen than ever to maximise their presence in one of the world's more dynamic regional market places," said FIL Exhibitions and Events director Amanda Stainer.

"It has been widely suggested in the Middle Eastern Press that Bahrain has one of the few economies which expects to benefit as the world recovers from the economic downturn and is therefore not only a place to do business now, but also presents excellent long-term potential for developing regional operational bases."

A sponsorship agreement was signed between Gulf Air senior management and CAA officials in a ceremony held at CAA headquarters in Bahrain on April 28 this year, in the presence of FIL officials.

Construction has been underway at the venue since March and involves the completion of 40 corporate hospitality business chalets, a VIP pavilion, a media centre, a restaurant, a royal suite for VIP guests and a public aircraft viewing area.

There will be no exhibition halls at the venue, but up to 40 participating companies from different sectors of the aviation industry will be able to meet invited delegations, high-level buyers and suppliers from the region in the VIP pavilion.

Firms taking part will be granted a fully fitted, air-conditioned chalet measuring 160 square metres for the duration of the show.



We wish to convey warmest greetings
and our good wishes to

His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa

His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
The Prime Minister

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa
Deputy Supreme Commander

& the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain
on the occasion of Bahrain's

National Day

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