

No drop in convention, exhibition industry, says Penang



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In Penang, where MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) events have an economic impact of over RM1 billion, bookings are being made not for the current year but for the coming years. – The Malaysian Insight file pic, February 11, 2019.

A GLOBAL economic slowdown this year will not badly affect Penang's bustling MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) business, the Penang Convention and Exhibition Bureau said.

Its chief executive officer Ashwin Gunasekeran said even in a slow economy, meetings would continue to be held, not stopped.

In Penang, where MICE events have an economic impact of over RM1 billion, bookings are being made not for the current year but for the coming years.

“We have a good problem. Conference biddings are done two years ahead or beyond, and we already have a packed 2019 calendar.

“At the Setia Spice convention centre, 80% of all the weekends this year have already been booked for events. We are now looking at business events for 2020 and as far as 2023.

“There is no drop in business because the conference industry is huge,” Ashwin told reporters after PCEB’s Chinese New Year luncheon today.

“Business travellers are huge. They are one of the segments that delivers at least three times more revenue than any other industry (to tourism).”

One of the big business events to be held in Penang this year is the World Seafood Congress, which will take place in September at Setia Spice in Bayan Baru.

Penang won the bid in 2017 to be the first Asian destination to host the event.

Ashwin also said in the event of a global economic slowdown, there might not be much business travelling in the US and Europe.

“But there will still be business event movements in the Asia Pacific region.”

He also said PCEB, a state agency set up to develop the business events and MICE industry, would be announcing the economic impact of business events in Penang next month.

“The analysis is nearly ready. We will announce the figures we achieved last year. We definitely achieved way above RM1 billion.” – February 11, 2019.