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**INTERNATIONAL SOURCING PROGRAMME (INSP) MIHAS 2018 SET TO
CATER THE EVER GROWING DEMANDS ON HALAL FROM 40 COUNTRIES
OVER THE WORLD**

INSP MIHAS 2018 act as the best platform to gather the international buyers and Malaysian companies for Halal brands to penetrate the global market

WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2018, KUALA LUMPUR: The International Sourcing Programme (INSP), which is organised in conjunction to the forthcoming 15th Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2018 has received confirmation from 217 foreign buyers from 42 countries.

According to Mr. Khairul Annuar Abdul Halim, the Director of the European and Americas Section of Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), which organises the INSP, Malaysian suppliers seeking export opportunities during the INSP need to get in touch with MATRADE quickly if they wish to leverage on this initiative.

'We will provide business-matching services between the Malaysian companies and these foreign buyers at Menara MATRADE on Tuesday 3 April 2018. MIHAS will be held from 4-7 April 2018 at Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC),' he said. The buyers were pre-selected and recommended by MATRADE's 47 offices worldwide.

Among the countries involved in the 1-day event are China, Australia, India, Japan, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Vietnam, Korea, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Egypt. In total, MATRADE will be coordinating more than 2,000 business meetings between local and foreign companies.

Held every year in conjunction with MIHAS, the INSP is a key component of the trade event alongside its exhibition counterpart where participating Malaysian companies enjoy the privilege of meeting specially invited foreign buyers. The INSP is a cost-effective platform for Malaysian companies to meet potential buyers from around the world at the comfort of their own home country. Over a 10-year period through this INSP, MATRADE has gained a recognition from the International Trade Centre (ITC) in its '*Halal Goes Global 2015 Report*' on this initiative.

According to Mr. Khairul, the INSP facilitates business matching for local companies, especially the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), so they could expand their business globally without having to bear hefty travel fees.

'Over the years, we have faithfully turned this annual gathering of buyers and sellers to become an important meeting point for our Halal exporters and foreign importers to further expand their business horizon in the global market,' he said.

The sectors highlighted at the event include Halal consumables (paste, sauces, ready-to-eat meals, and confectionery), Non-food products (cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and palm oil-based products), certified premises (hotels, restaurants, central kitchens and slaughterhouses) and Islamic financial services (banking services, takaful and retirement & pension fund).

The top-5 Malaysian states recording the highest participation in this year's INSP are Selangor (42.3%), Kuala Lumpur (17.5%), Johor (11%), Penang (6%) and Malacca (4.1%). Apart from the companies that have registered with MATRADE prior to the event, we also anticipate more companies to attend the event as walk-in participants.

The top-5 Malaysian states recording the highest participation in this year's INSP are within the food and beverages sector, having contributed the largest number of sales for the INSP. For this year's event, MATRADE is targeting to match the outcome generated last year despite the smaller number of buyers in this year's edition.

Khairul explained that MATRADE is confident that it can repeat last year's sales of RM301.9 million even with a smaller number of buyers and the associated costs as it has been even more stringent on the buyer-screening process. 'Furthermore, our focus is on new buyers and new markets,' he added.

"This year, for the first time, we are having four companies offering Islamic financial services. This indicates a growing interest to export more Halal services and iterates that Halal is more than just food and beverages," he explained.

MIHAS, which was inceptioned in 2004 with the vision of making Malaysia a global Halal marketplace, has earned a reputation as the world's largest Halal trade fair. Organised by MATRADE, it is hosted by Ministry of International Trade and Industry in association of Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and Halal Development Corporation (HDC). For more details on the event, visit www.mihias.com.my.

MATRADE encourages Malaysian companies offering Halal products and services to leverage on the one-on-one pre-arranged business meetings scheduled for them once they registered in the INSP. Malaysian companies that are keen to participate, can register in the event by emailing to inspmihias@matrade.gov.my or call INSP Secretariat at 03-6207 7489 / 7490 / 7491.

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About MATRADE

The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) was established on March 1, 1993 as the external trade promotion arm of Malaysia's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). Its functions are:

- To promote, assist and develop Malaysia's external trade with particular emphasis on the export of manufactured and semi-manufactured products and services;
- To formulate and implement export marketing strategies and trade promotion activities to promote Malaysia's export;
- To undertake commercial intelligence and market research and create a comprehensive database of information for the improvement and development of Malaysia's trade;
- To organise training programmes to improve the international marketing skills of Malaysian exporters;
- To enhance and protect Malaysia's international trade investment abroad; and
- To promote, facilitate and assist in the services areas related to trade.