

Cairo

6th International Forum of Hadj, Umrah and Inter-Arab Tourism

Cairo - Mounir El-Fishawy

Although the International Arab Company for Exhibitions and Conventions this year limited itself to organizing its forum only in Cairo it was still extremely successful. This shows its increasing competence year after a year of organizing the International Forum of Hadj, Umrah and Inter-Arab tourism. The participants : exhibitors and sponsors alike, praised the organization, planning and location of stands in the big room of the Samiramis-Intercontinental Hotel. The stands were positioned to allow fair competition between companies in attracting visitors to the pavilions.

The forum, held from April 23rd - 25th, witnessed a remarkable participation of big hotels in Jedda, Mecca and Madina, as well as tourism companies, travel agencies and hotels – mainly from Saudi with Egyptian companies representing Saudi tourism and hotels. A number of tourism publications (newspapers and magazines) participated in the exhibition, among them the Saudi newspaper « Okkad », media sponsor of the forum, and « Islamic Tourism », which received an award for the second time, because of its success in attracting visitors to its stand. They collected large numbers of different editions of the magazine : Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The first day was crowded, with many professional visitors and the general public. The other days recorded a satisfactory number of visitors. The forum's chairwomen and head of the organising company, Mouna Jalal, told Islamic Tourism: « The resounding success is not a matter of luck, it is due to the grace of God, and thanks to the hard work and valuable experiences we have gained. We campaigned and promoted the forum through the Saudi and Egyptian mass media and through a scientific plan. We also sent hundreds of invitations to tourism companies, embassies, charities, government organisations, clubs and associations ; this widened the field of interaction between sellers and purchasers within the pavilions and provided a healthy climate for competition between societies and Egyptian tourist and travel agencies and people eager



to perform hadj or umrah,.

She added: «It may be a good omen that the Egyptians make up 43% of people interested in performing umrah. This explains the big rush to the Egyptian market by hadj and umrah societies, travel agencies and hotels».

Mouna Jalal concluded her statement by mentioning that the 7th session in 2006, will see, God's willing, a qualitative improvement in the forum's programmes since it is anticipated that it will be organized successively in a number of Arab and African countries.

The forum began with a press conference attended by a large number of journalists. It was inaugurated by Dr. Ahmed Omar Hashim, ex-president of Al-Azhar University, and VIPs. Several conferences were organised in conjunction with the forum. The first was on the theme of «Islamic Call and its methods of worship». Another meeting was

convened on «The role of the Hadiyat Al-Hadj and Al -Moatamir Foundation in the enhancement of Saudi Arabia's international image». The representative of «Islamic Tourism» spoke about the role of religious tourism in the development of tourism between Egypt and Arab countries. He underlined the hinderances to the activation of inter-Arab tourism, notably the difficulties in getting visas, the rising cost of air transport, the closing of some inter-Arab borders for security or political reasons, obstacles to Arab tourism and influences on investment in tourism. He called for the need to unite Arab-Islamic efforts in order to achieve the desired objectives, to eliminate all tensions and hindrances and to implement the decisions and recommendations of conventions of Arab ministers of tourism in order to improve Arab-Moslem tourism. ■