

Dubai awaits leisure marine community

This year's event will feature a record breaking 41 premieres including 11 world launches and 30 regional premieres

By KEVIN SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Dubai Saeed Al Hareb fondly remembers his childhood by the sea.

As a youngster growing up in Shindagha, he regularly looked out at the old wooden dhows transporting their wares down Dubai Creek, which to this day remains a vital component of the city's economy.

"For many Emiratis, the sea is in their blood. When I was growing up in Shindagha I saw the sea every day and I talked the language of the boat," he said.

In his current position as managing director of Dubai International Marine Club (DIMC), Al Hareb's passion for the maritime way of life is very much evident. Next weekend, he will oversee the 19th edition of the Dubai International Boat Show, one of the world's largest leisure marine trade events.

"In terms of the maritime history of the UAE, it is clear that Dubai Creek is a major hub for commercial business, especially for transit purposes. But facilities have improved over the years and we now have Dubai Maritime City and Dubai Drydocks World, he said. "Dubai is increasingly becoming a top destination for the leisure marine community and the Dubai International Boat Show plays a



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Welcoming shores

Saeed Al Hareb, Managing Director of the Dubai International Marine Club, and Helal Al Marri, CEO of the Dubai World Trade Centre, unveil plans for the boat show.

leading role in that success." This year's event, which runs from March 1 to 5 at DIMC, will feature a record-breaking 41 premieres — including 11 world launches and 30 regional premieres — suggesting a renewed confidence in the Middle East's marine market.

The number of boats in the GCC alone is expected to reach 50,600 according to latest industry reports, emphasising the interest from first-time buyers.

Helal Saeed Al Marri, CEO of the Dubai World

Trade Centre, said the show was the lynchpin of the Arabian boating industry and the driving force behind the Middle East's increasing marine market share. "The Dubai International Boating Show brings together the leading marine companies from across the world, driving business across five continents," he said.

"It is both the catalyst for the Middle East leisure marine industry and the focal point of the worldwide boating industry, stimulating demand and encouraging

trade between the hundreds of international companies that recognise its importance and success," he added.

Attendance boost

The number of companies exhibiting at this year's show is up 20 per cent with first-time appearances by Belgium, the Czech Republic, Monaco, Oman, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Ukraine taking the total number of participating countries to 42.

Francois Sporrer, trade commissioner at the Con-

DISPLAY PUBLIC CAN VISIT TOO

Dubai International Boat Show runs from March 1 to 5 at the Dubai International Marine Club, Mina Seyahi. The show will open to trade visitors and the general public from 4 to 9.30 pm daily.

More than 425 boats and yachts will be on display along with 13 of Mercedes-Benz's top of the range 4x4s, supercars and executive saloons. Competitions, prize giveaways and music will be running throughout the show.

— K.S.

sulate of France, said the show was increasing in importance as many countries feel the more traditional maritime markets in Europe and the United States are now saturated.

"We are focusing our attentions on emerging markets such as the GCC," he said. "The UAE is developing a very active tourism industry and new marinas are scheduled to come online at Saadiyat Island and Yas Island in Abu Dhabi. There is a very promising market for yachting in the UAE and it is our role to help French companies take advantage of the opportunities that are present in the region," he added.