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**Dubai Customs opens Carpet & Art Oasis 2016**

**Key attraction of 21st edition of Dubai Shopping Festival**

Under the theme “Dubai City of Carpet”, H.E. Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Chairman of DP World and Chairman of Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation, and H.E. Ahmed Mahboob Musabih, Director of Dubai Customs, today (December 30) cut the ribbon at a ceremony to open the 21st edition of the Carpet & Art Oasis, a long-running attraction of the annual Dubai Shopping Festival.

The Carpet & Art Oasis, which is organised by Dubai Customs at the Dubai World Trade Centre, Zabeel Hall 2, will run until January 15, 2016. The inauguration ceremony was attended by H.E Laila Mohammad Suhail, CEO of the Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), an agency of the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), and the organisers of DSF, along with some members of the diplomatic community in the UAE and other DSF officials.

The Carpet & Art Oasis is one of the largest and most anticipated carpet exhibitions in the world, proudly showcasing 250,000 high-end and trusted-quality handmade carpets at an estimated net market value of AED 2.5 billion. Year after year, it became one of DSF’s iconic events which has helped in boosting the retail industry and economic growth in Dubai.

H.E. Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem said, “The Carpet and Art Oasis is an initiative Dubai Customs ardently looked after over the last two decades consecutively. The Oasis brings together a multinational crowd of people with a penchant for hand-made works of art. Hundreds of exhibitors from around the world are taking part in the bonanza this year.”

From her side, Her Excellency Laila Mohammad Suhail, Dubai Festivals & Retail Establishment CEO, stressed on the importance of Carpets & Art Oasis as a main event of Dubai Shopping Festival since its inception.

 “It has become a main destination for DSF’s multinational visitors and a great family attraction. The success of the event is a clear result of the solid cooperation between Dubai Government agencies to achieve the strategic targets laid by the Dubai Leadership”

“Our support to this unique event reflects our strong commitment to enhance the retail sector in Dubai across all its segments”, H.E. Laila Suhail said.

H.E. Ahmed Mahboub Musabih, the Director of Dubai Customs, said that the Carpet & Art Oasis contributes to boosting the trade and economic movement in the carpet industry, as it features precious and rare carpets brought from the most famous carpet-producing countries in the world; China, India Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Kashmir and others.

“The Oasis has recorded a resounded success over its 21-year journey. Since its inauguration 21 years ago, the number of visitors flocking to the Carpet Oasis has reached over one million, with total sales of more than AED 2 billion and nearly 2.5 million carpets have been exhibited thus far.

“The Oasis includes a museum that displays historical documents and holdings that tell the story of Dubai Customs from the beginning till now. The main entrance of the Oasis is a miniature model of Dubai Customs’ first building with a 3D panorama pictures of the late sheiks who used it as their official office to run the emirate,” said Musabih.

Abdul Rahman Issa, Chairman of the Carpet Oasis' Steering Committee, said that the 21st edition of the Carpet & Art Oasis displays a huge number of precious carpets. Some of these carpets will be sold in public auctions on the sidelines of the Oasis. “With a 20% increase in area, the exhibition is held over 6,000 square meters, and includes 54 pavilions spreading over 4,000 square meters. The remaining area is used to hold auctions on handmade rugs and conduct workshops for visitors to see how carpets are made and how knots are tied. There are daily raffle draws, in coordination with DSF, at the Oasis, offering visitors a chance to take home valuable prizes,” added Issa.

Abdulrahman Issa stated that Turkistan and Azerbaijan are taking part in the Oasis for the first time and are displaying their rugs in a 500-square meter pavilion. He expects to see deals worth millions of dirhams being sealed at the Oasis, as last year’s sales turnover went above AED 120 million.

He noted that around 25% of displayed items are antiques that are showcased for the first time. Some of these date back to over 400-500 years and are brought to the Oasis only as display items. “The price tag on some rugs runs as high as millions of dirhams,” Issa added.

The Carpet Oasis is open for visitors Saturdays to Thursdays from 10am to 10pm and Fridays from 4pm to 11pm, with no entry fees.

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