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Tajuk : Awg Tengah: Collaboration to improve state wood-based industry

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BY CHRISTOPHER LIDOM

KUCHING: A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed between Sarawak Timber Industry and Development Corporation (PUSAKA) and Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS) in an effort to transform the state wood-based industry to enable it to compete in the global market.

According to Minister of Industrial and Entrepreneur Development, Trade and Investment, Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, PUSAKA has taken the initiative to collaborate with UNIMAS through the 'Pusaka chair', which is a research fund and product development for wood-based products.

"The MoA signing is in line with the government's effort to transform the timber industry in Sarawak which currently depends on exports of wood and wood-based products such as logs, plywood, lumber and others.

"Through the research fund, PUSAKA can make full use of the intellectual capacity from UNIMAS to stimulate the diversification of

furniture designs that can be commercialised in the international market," he said at the MoA signing ceremony held at UNIMAS Staff Lounge, yesterday.

He added that it would also provide employment opportunities for the state and expand the economy based on creativity and innovation.

Awang Tengah also noted that the research effort could add value to the state's natural resources.

"This collaboration also covers the training of vendors and operators of local furniture industry, conducting furniture workshops, and upstream and downstream research.

"With PUSAKA efforts, we also aim to produce young designers among university students and also local students who are capable and competitive to produce furniture designs for sale in the global market," he said.

Awang Tengah also pointed out that they plan to use wood from Acacia Mangium species in planted forests to produce the furniture.

Earlier on, UNIMAS Deputy Chancellor Prof. Dato' Dr Mohamad

Kadim Suaidi said the collaboration between UNIMAS and PUSAKA can be seen as facilitating the development of the national furniture industry so that the country could achieve the third largest furniture exporter in the world by 2020.

He pointed out that the wood-based products are environment-friendly and have a lower carbon footprint compared with other products such as iron, aluminium, PVC and many others.

"This factor will be the main attraction in the use of wood-based furniture selection and some of UNIMAS researchers have won several awards on a national level through the production of wood-based products," he said.

He added that to balance between the use of raw materials, especially wood, the environmental management aspect must be balanced, efficient and sustainable.

"It is important to ensure that this industry will continue to be sustainable and strong," he said, adding that the collaboration would also focus on human capital development.



(FRONT row, from left) Kopli, Kadim, Sarudu and Hashim signing the MoA between PUSAKA and UNIMAS, while Julaihi, Awang Tengah and Hatta Solhi and other distinguished guests look on.

Kadim pointed out that it was important for the state to have a line of educated, talented youths who are able to produce furniture based on local original designs and compete in the global market.

Also present were Assistant

Minister for Industrial Development (Investment and Promotion) Datuk Julaihi Narawi, STIDC General Manager, Datu Haji Sarudu Haji Hoklai, STIDC Deputy General Manager, Hashim Haji Bojet, UNIMAS board chairman Datu Dr

Hatta Solhi, UNIMAS Academic and International Deputy Chancellor Prof Dr Wan Hashim Wan Ibrahim, UNIMAS Research and Innovation Deputy Chancellor Prof Dr Kopli Bujang, and other distinguished guests.