

State potentially country's top furniture export contributor

KUCHING: Sarawak has the potential to be the number one contributor of the country's total furniture export.

Being a major producer of tropical timber and timber products in the world, the state could achieve the status by producing value-added products with local traditional ethnic identity for the international niche market.

Minister of Natural Resource and Environment Dato Sri Douglas Uggah Embas urged furniture manufacturers and related industry players in Sarawak to fully embrace change and explore the various available technologies, expertise, incentives and new materials to enhance the design and quality of their products for export markets.

He said this when speaking at the official opening of 'Sarawak Furniture Industry Development Seminar 2012' organised by the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC), University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) at the Riverside Hotel here yesterday.

"More than 90 per cent of the local furniture production is exported mainly to America, Japan and Singapore," Uggah said.

"The export value in 2010 was RM 7.69 billion compared with RM 5.09 billion in 2001. In the same period, the value of furniture imports increased from RM 0.38 billion to RM 1.31 billion," he added.

It shows a positive result and bright future in the industry; however, they are also facing intense competitions, especially from China, Vietnam and Indonesia.

The Minister said furniture and wood-based industry players must take a serious view of the trade barriers and requirements for green products resulting from concerns over environmental issues especially the



MOU inked as (left to right) STIDC General Manager Datu Haji Sarudu Haji Hoklai, FRIM Director General Dato' Dr Abd Latif Mohmod and UNIMAS Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Songan exchange the documents after the MOU Signing Ceremony held at a leading hotel, here yesterday.

conservation and sustainability of biodiversity and forest resource.

In this area, he said, the FRIM has the expertise, experience and facilities for the research, development and commercialisation of furniture and other forestry products to offer assistance to the industry players.

Apart from offering various testing services to ensure product compliance with international standard, FRIM also helps to address various challenges faced by the industry including producing new products from readily-available alternative resources such as agricultural wastes and developing value-added niche products for foreign markets.

In conjunction with the event Uggah witnessed the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the aforesaid three parties namely FRIM, STIDC and UNIMAS, for collaboration in the areas of furniture design and development, training, technical services and the setting up of a furniture testing laboratory in Sarawak.

Forest Research and Development Board Malaysia (MFRDB) Chairman Nancy Shukri was also present to witness the ceremony.

The establishment of the laboratory will pave the way for the development of a Furniture Centre of Excellence which will serve as a reference to many parties especially the industry players, researchers and students in the state to produce furniture produce of international standards.

After the ceremony, a 2-day-seminar was held to discuss the trends and challenges faced by the industry. It was also to further discuss on the constraints of furniture exports, the importance of design and testing requirements, the raw material as well as the financial and incentive support available.



UGGAH and Nancy visiting the booths after the signing ceremony yesterday.

PHOTOS: JOHN CHAN