

*Establishment of furniture testing lab timely - Nancy*

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**KUCHING:** Malaysia Forestry Research and Development Board (MFRDB) views the effort by Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) to establish a furniture testing laboratory in the state as appropriate and timely.

MFRDB chairperson Nancy Shukri believes the cooperation between Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and STIDC will help local furniture industry players produce furniture that meet market needs and international specifications.

"In the long run, the furniture examination lab will be developed to be a centre of excellence for furniture which will be a reference for all industry players, researchers and students in the state in an effort to produce furniture of international standards," she said during her speech at the official opening of Sarawak Furniture Industry Development Seminar 2012 here yesterday.

Nancy was glad to note that FRIM's role in research, development and commercialisation (R&D&C) in the country had been recognised.

"The laboratory had been accredited by Furniture Research Association UK as recognition that the examinations done by FRIM had been recognised internationally," she added.

She, however, regretted that from 2005 till now, only 11 furniture companies in Sarawak had used the lab, and from 2009 to 2010, no company sent its furniture for examination there while only two companies did so this year.

Besides the furniture examination lab, she said FRIM also had a wood composite testing lab which had been accredited with ISO/IEC 17025 for formaldehyde release test since 2005.

"FRIM has moved another step forward with the establishment of the big scale formaldehyde release lab based on the standard ASTM E 1333 which complies with the Californian Air Resource Board," Nancy elaborated.

She stated that with the facilities and expertise available, FRIM had been successful in helping industry players tackle issues related to furniture quality demanded by the international market ranging from zero or low formaldehyde emission to green products and durability.

"It is clear that the quality aspect and examination by FRIM have helped the industry players in making their furniture accepted in the international market," Nancy added.

Meanwhile, general manager of STIDC Datu Sarudu Hoklai said STIDC as a body that manages and develops the timber industry welcomed efforts to develop the furniture industry in the state.

He said there was still room for the furniture industry in the state to develop considering that the state was the smallest furniture exporter constituting about RM300 million a year or only three per cent of the country's furniture export in 2010.

Sarudu stated that in its effort to encourage locals to be involved in the furniture industry, STIDC had established a training institution in Tanjung Manis offering training in basic furniture carving and making.

"Besides that, we also have a complex in Samarahan which can be used by those who are interested in the furniture industry," he added.

Sarudu expressed confidence that with STIDC's facilities and technical support from FRIM and Unimas, the furniture industry would move forward further.

On another note, deputy vice-chancellor of Unimas Prof Dr Peter Songan in his speech said the smart partnership between FRIM, STIDC and Unimas reflected their seriousness to develop the furniture industry in the state.

"This is to ensure that the transformation of the timber industry in the country is dynamic and competitive for the development of the country's economy," he added.