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The official magazine of the
Malaysian International Furniture Fair

DEC
2023

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the dynamic world of MIFF 2024, where innovation, tradition, and excellence converge to weave a tapestry of unparalleled quality. As we celebrate the Pearl Jubilee of Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) on 1-4 March 2024, we find ourselves immersed in three decades of steadfast commitment to showcasing the finest in the country's furniture industry.

In this edition, we bring you a comprehensive *MIFF Update* (page 4) that not only reflects on the fair's rich history but also highlights the enduring partnerships with our loyal exhibitors. Their dedication has tightly woven the fabric of MIFF, making it a beacon of excellence in the global furniture market.

Now & Then (page 7) explores the transformative journey of three young furniture mavericks who are reshaping the industry with their innovative approaches. From tradition to transformation, these visionaries are pushing boundaries and redefining the future of furniture design.

Our *Cover Story* (page 10) unfolds the fascinating narrative of Luxury Sleep, showcasing tales of resilience and modern approaches to mattress comfort. Discover how this brand has evolved as Malaysia's premier mattress maker, setting new standards in luxury and comfort.

The heart of the magazine beats with *Fabulous Furniture* (pages 16 and 30), offering you a glimpse into the home and office furniture showcase at the upcoming MIFF 2024. Immerse yourself in the world where style meets comfort in home furniture delights, and witness the seamless fusion of comfort and productivity in innovative office furnishings.

In our *Special Report* (page 33), we delve into *Furnishing the Future* as Spring Art Industries embraces change through innovative and daring initiatives. Explore how this forward-thinking company is shaping the future landscape of the furniture industry.

Our *Spotlight* (page 36) shines on *FRIM's Green Initiatives*, where the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) strives for a more sustainable future through innovative timber solutions. Discover how FRIM is leading the way in environmental consciousness and contributing to a greener planet.

As you flip through the pages of this edition, we invite you to explore, be inspired and immerse yourself in the stories that define MIFF 2024. Thank you for being a part of our journey and for celebrating 30 years of excellence with us.



Warm regards,

Kelie Lim
General Manager
MIFF

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Celebrating the fair's 30-year tapestry of excellence, woven tight with loyal exhibitors

by Khor Hui-Min

As the 30th anniversary of the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) approaches in 2024, the furniture industry is abuzz with excitement—and anticipation is building among MIFF's loyal exhibitor and buyers.

The threads of innovation, commitment, and international connectivity woven throughout MIFF's history are a testament to the fair's enduring impact on the Malaysian furniture industry. As an industry stalwart and a highly anticipated event every March, MIFF's outstanding record is proof of its lasting significance in the industry. In this article, some of MIFF's loyal exhibitors shared heartwarming memories at the fair through the years.

Wegmans Furniture reminisced about setting up a faux café at their booth, unknowingly charming visitors who mistook them for real coffee purveyors. Meanwhile, Delano Furniture Industries, Isella, Merryfair Chair System, and NuKoncept shared the transformative impact of MIFF on businesses, emphasising the fair's unwavering commitment to innovation and international connectivity. The Muar Furniture Association applauded MIFF's

pandemic pivot to a virtual tour. And other exhibitors like Ivorie International, Johann & Joann, Boston Office Furniture and Titov raised their glasses in a toast to a future of growth and more cutting-edge designs with MIFF.

Ivorie International

Established over 30 years ago, Ivorie specialises in dining furniture, cabinets, and entertainment furniture for the living room. Their export market encompasses Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America.

"We were established in 2010, and in 2011, we started exhibiting with MIFF. We joined MIFF because our friends recommended it as a good platform for us to connect with international buyers. After the first time, we were convinced that MIFF was the right platform for us because we produced modern furniture, and most of the big cities overseas were able to accept our modern designs," said Ms. Chua Yee Ting of Ivorie.

According to Ms. Chua, it was important for Ivorie to have their own designs because that gave them their unique identity. If not, they would be stuck in a price war with other furniture companies.

"We started at MIFF with a small booth. Over the years, our booth grew bigger and bigger. Of course, we continued working with MIFF because the fair continuously brought us new customers every year. In the first physical fair after the pandemic, we had better quality visitors because they really came with the intention to buy something," shared Ms. Chua.

"MIFF is getting better and better, and we hope to grow alongside the fair. All the best on your 30th anniversary," said Ms. Chua.

Johann & Joann

Johann & Joann, a furniture designer, manufacturer, and exporter, was established in 2016 after a rebranding exercise. From their humble beginnings, Johann & Joann began exporting to the USA. Today, their major markets include Australia and New Zealand.

"Over the years, we have seen our business grow, with more visitors coming to our booth at MIFF. We always look forward to engaging with our customers to better understand their needs and requirements, which, in turn, helps us gain a better understanding of the market," said Mr. Leong Wei Mang, executive director of Johann & Joann.

"We will be at MIFF every year to meet our existing customers and to explore potential new business opportunities. It is tiring to prepare for the showcase, but it's worth it. MIFF is getting bigger every year, and they always do their best to ensure the fair lives up to international standards. Happy 30th anniversary to MIFF from me and my whole team!" said Mr. Leong.

Boston Office Furniture

In its early years, Boston Office Furniture started by joining fairs for local markets. Later on, as they expanded, they set their sights on the international market. They joined the furniture fair in Dubai. When MIFF started, they joined the fair because it promoted Malaysian furniture makers to the international markets.

"Every year, we see new buyers coming from overseas, and that motivates us to keep coming back to MIFF. Our fondest memory at MIFF was when the buyers queued up to pay. That was the best feeling ever," said Madam Irene Yoh Kon Keow, founder of Boston Office Furniture.

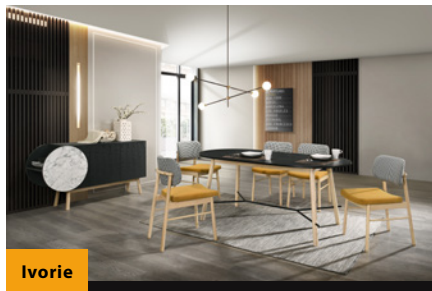
"We will continue working with MIFF. As MIFF grows each year, we will grow alongside them. Wishing MIFF a happy 30th anniversary!" said Mr. Alex Lo Boon Hwai, director of Boston Office Furniture.

Delano Furniture Industries

Established in 1979, Delano Furniture Industries produces a wide range of furniture with contemporary designs. MIFF is the largest Malaysian furniture fair catering to the export market, making it the obvious choice for Delano to participate in and connect with international buyers.

"Over the years, we had the pleasure of meeting numerous new buyers from overseas and enjoyed discussions with them. We found their suggestions to be useful, which helped us grow," said Mr. Ng Kuang Sneah, chairman of Delano Furniture Industries.

"With 30 years in the market, MIFF's branding is very strong and well-established. International buyers are



Ivorie



Johann & Joann



Delano Furniture Industries



Boston Office Furniture

familiar with MIFF, and it has become their gateway to the Malaysian furniture industry," said Mr. Ng Yeow Hooi, managing director of Delano Furniture Industries.

"Wishing MIFF a happy 30th anniversary!" said both of them in unison.

Isella

Established in 1997, Isella specialises in leather upholstered sofas. With the aspiration to export their products overseas, they joined MIFF two years later to attract international customers.

"Before MIFF, we only supplied our products to the local market. We had showrooms and sold our sofas through dealers, too. MIFF was the only Malaysian fair that attracted international buyers, so it was the way for us to expand our market overseas," said Mr. Henry Er, founder of Isella.

"MIFF has grown over the years, and we have grown alongside it. Of course, we have had our fair share of challenges, but we always get new visitors and customers at our booth. Hence, you will always see us at MIFF every year. Happy 30th anniversary to MIFF!" said Mr. Er.

Merryfair Chair System

Merryfair Chair System started as an office chair component manufacturer, before progressing to becoming a full-fledged office chair manufacturer. Eventually, they grew their local market and then expanded

overseas. Currently, Merryfair is looking into online markets, while servicing both the B2B and B2C customers.

"Merryfair was invited to exhibit at MIFF, and it has been an eye-opening experience for me. Without MIFF, it's harder for us to identify as a Malaysian office furniture and chair manufacturer," said Joon Ong, head of international sales.

"MIFF is like a meeting ground where exhibitors, buyers, and suppliers meet up and talk to each other. There has been a growth in international visitors over the years. I hope there will be more local exhibitors so that we can showcase what Malaysian furniture makers can do," said Jane Ong, head of local sales and marketing.

"I wish everybody great success for MIFF 2024. Happy 30th anniversary, MIFF!" she added.

NuKoncept

NuKoncept, a company specialising in beds and dining sets, was established over 20 years ago. They started exhibiting at MIFF in 1998.

"Upon joining MIFF, we started to venture into the export market. During our first year at the fair, we brought furniture with measurements for the Malaysian market to showcase. However, we realised we needed to provide furniture with measurements for export markets. So, for our second year at MIFF, we came better prepared. We learned valuable insights from international buyers about their preferences, helping us to craft furniture that would be well received

overseas,” shared Mr. H.E. Lee, manager of NuKoncept.

“Five years in, we started getting significant orders from the UK and Australia. And after 2010, we started getting substantial orders from Japan. For over 20 years, MIFF has been instrumental in providing us with guidance and feedback on the preferences of international buyers. Wishing MIFF a happy 30th anniversary and more successful fairs to come!” he added.

Titov

Established in 2008, Titov is a manufacturer and exporter of well-designed bedroom sets, living room sets, and dining sets.

“From Day 1, when we set up the company, we already decided to participate in MIFF. We intended to supply our furniture to the export market, and MIFF was a good platform to meet international buyers. In our first year at MIFF, we had a very good experience and that gave us the confidence to continue for the second year,” said Ms. Cheryl Tan, general manager of Titov.

“I truly hope that Malaysian furniture can become a premium product rather than a commodity. The new generation is coming up with new ideas and new designs, so I believe the furniture industry has a bright future. I hope that MIFF continues to grow, succeed, improve, and usher Malaysian furniture into a new era. Happy 30th anniversary!” she added.



Merryfair
Chair System



Wegmans Furniture

Wegmans Furniture

Wegmans Furniture, specialising in wooden dining sets, has been operating in Muar for 25 years. In their early years, Wegmans primarily focused on manufacturing OEM furniture. However, they needed to expand their market, so they came up with innovative designs and slowly moved towards producing more ODM products as part of their growth strategy.

“We have been with MIFF for 10 years. I still remember the first year we exhibited at MIFF, and it was at the MATRADE Exhibition Convention Centre (MECC),” said Ms. Wynce Keh, business development manager at Wegmans Furniture.

“From 2016 to 2018, we had the best response and the biggest crowd at the booth. In 2018, we made a special arrangement to set up a cafe at our booth. We used our dining sets, so we could promote our samples to visitors at the same time. It was funny when some of the visitors thought we were a real cafe and insisted on paying us for the drinks. But we were actually providing complimentary refreshments to all,” she recalled fondly.

According to Ms. Keh, MIFF has played a very important role in helping Wegmans promote its furniture to visitors from all over the world. They were able to meet more potential customers and explore different markets.

“This year, we were very happy that MIFF developed an app to help us save the



NuKoncept



Titov

contact details of potential customers so that they didn’t need to go through the hassle of writing down their details in our visitor book when they ran out of name cards,” said Ms. Win.

“We will continue to walk with MIFF. Happy 30th anniversary!” she added.

Muar Furniture Association

Muar furniture factories were established to meet the demands of the local market. Over the years, they expanded their reach and now export products to 180 countries. In addition, they pushed innovation by incorporating new materials.


The Muar Furniture Association (MFA) has been around for over 40 years, tirelessly helping furniture businesses in Muar to grow, as well as assisting members in navigating government interactions.

“Our most memorable time with MIFF was during the pandemic when we could not have a physical exhibition. It was a challenging time for our members. Luckily, MIFF rose to the challenge to organise a MIFF virtual tour in 2020, so our members could still participate and exhibit their products,” said Mr. Steve Ong, president of MFA.

“After the pandemic, we were very happy to welcome visitors face-to-face at our booth again at MIFF. Besides helping our members exhibit their furniture at MIFF, we have also organised trips to bring our members overseas to better understand the foreign markets and the needs of foreign customers,” said Mr. Goh Song Huang, secretary general of MFA.

“We will continue to encourage our members to innovate to produce better designs and products,” continued Mr. Ong.

“We look forward to working more closely with MIFF to achieve better outcomes for our members. Happy 30th anniversary to MIFF,” added Mr. Goh.

As MIFF celebrates its Pearl Jubilee, these narratives collectively express heartfelt gratitude and anticipation for a continued legacy of success in the years to come. 

From Tradition to Transformation

How three young furniture mavericks are redefining the industry, one innovation at a time

by Tan Sher Lynn

An exciting narrative unfolds as a new generation of entrepreneurs steps into the helm of family businesses—bridging timeless traditions of the past with dynamic aspirations for the future. We talked to three young leaders navigating different challenges and opportunities as they steer their family's businesses toward new directions.

Nick Wee spearheaded the transformation of BSL Furniture from a wooden children's furniture subcontractor to a global player. Similarly, Poh Li Shan of Intergo Furniture and Goh Song Pei of Alian Furniture also contribute to their family's legacies through innovative marketing and operational strategies, promoting growth and adaptability. The young entrepreneurs' proactive strategies, such as participating in international exhibitions, modernising operations and focusing on sustainability, have propelled their company's growth toward global success.



“As the director of BSL Furniture, I oversee various aspects of the business, from marketing and business development to operations.”

- Nick Wee

synonymous with high-quality wooden bedroom furniture tailored for children and young adults.

Upholding Family Legacy with Fresh Strategies

BSL Furniture's journey towards sustainable innovation

With 18 years of expertise in the furniture industry, BSL Furniture has become

Upon his return to Malaysia, Wee worked as a wholesale furniture salesman for his uncle for two years before going back to Muar to take over the reins of his family's business while concurrently managing the export endeavors he had established.

His proactive approach to introducing BSL Furniture to the global market involved participating in exhibitions such as the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) 2013, which expanded the company's reach and reputation. Thanks to his efforts, BSL Furniture has now grown significantly, with business partners all over the world, including the US, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, France, Algeria and Australia.

Navigating changes

“As the director of BSL Furniture, I oversee various aspects of the business, from marketing and business development to operations,” Wee said, adding that he also introduced the standard operating procedures (SOP) and working drawings to streamline the production process.

To ensure transparency for his customers, Wee provided weekly production updates and implemented quality control checks



BSL Furniture

The company was founded by Wee Kok Lee in 2005 in Muar as a subcontractor for wooden children's furniture. In 2012, Nick Wee (Wee), the eldest son of Wee Kok Lee, initiated the export business for BSL Furniture while he was studying at a university in the US.

at every stage. This process, called the manufacturer execution system (MES), helped enhance customer trust and satisfaction.

“It was not easy to implement changes to the company initially, as my parents

were accustomed to traditional methods. So, I collected data and examples to demonstrate the benefits of modernising our approach, and explained to them in a way that they can understand,” he added.

His efforts and perseverance paid off as gradually his parents began to trust his vision, transitioning from a volume-centric mindset to a value-oriented mindset.

Embracing sustainability and automation

Wee also led his company with an eco-conscious approach. Among his initiatives was using rubber wood sourced from trees that had ceased to produce latex for his furniture. “Our materials are environmentally friendly because if we don’t utilise these wood, they would be burned, posing harm to the environment,” he said.

In addition, he had plans to power their new factory in the Muar Furniture Park with solar energy and increase the use of automation in the facility. Set to be completed by the end of 2024, this new factory would house three production lines, contributing to 10 containers of furniture per production line. “This new factory will increase production capacity and efficiency, which means our costs can be reduced and we can provide better prices to our customers,” he said.

Looking toward the future, Wee is focused on three core aspects: Production, education and design. He envisioned improving the brand’s image through enhanced quality and services, positioning BSL Furniture as the go-to choice for children’s furniture. “We hope that when people are looking for kids’ furniture, they will think about BSL Furniture,” he remarked.

In terms of education, he planned to establish a training center at the factory and collaborate with universities to nurture young and skilled professionals in furniture manufacturing.

Additionally, BSL Furniture collaborates with young designers to create furniture that not only boasts stunning aesthetics but also excels in functionality and environmental sustainability. “Our mission is to create products that are fast to produce, cost-effective, eco-friendly and affordable for a wide range of consumers—ensuring that everyone can

enjoy high-quality solid wood furniture,” he said with a smile.

Building Upon Her Father’s Legacy From Denver to Malaysia, a young woman aims to uplift her family’s business

After graduating, Poh Li Shan worked for the American Furniture Warehouse to gain some experience in the furniture industry. Currently, as the senior marketing executive at Intergo Furniture, she is in charge of the USA and UK markets. This role fits perfectly with her passion and experience as she enjoys dealing with buyers and introducing Malaysian furniture to the world.

With her newfound knowledge, she returned to Malaysia and joined her family’s business as a senior marketing executive concentrating on the US and UK markets. Her goal was to hone her skills and gain more knowledge to help expand the family business. Their company, Intergo Furniture, is known internationally as the wooden sofa specialist.

“I think one of the resources that I was able to bring to the company was my experiences in the US. It allows me to better communicate with our business partners overseas in the language they are comfortable with. Moreover, my time at AFW helped me to understand the US market and gave me an idea of what type of furniture the customers are looking for to fulfill their needs,” she shared.

Innovative proposals and initiatives

While Poh currently held the role of senior marketing executive, she aspired to further develop her skills and knowledge before transitioning into a leadership position. She actively proposed innovative strategies to the management and marketing teams, contributing to the



“As of now, I will try to propose new strategies to our management and marketing team whenever there’s a need.”

— Poh Li Shan



Intergo Furniture

company’s adaptability. “As of now, I will try to propose new strategies to our management and marketing team whenever there’s a need,” she said.

Noticing that most of the workers are afraid to share their ideas or communicate with the management when they are facing issues, Poh initiated weekly leadership meetings, fostering a supportive environment where employees can openly share ideas and address concerns.

Boosting employee morale and productivity

To boost productivity, the company implemented the material requirement planning (MRP) system. “This allows purchasers to control our inventory management with ease based on their needs and preferences. Besides that, MRP has helped simplify our daily work, such as order entry, purchasing, production, stock control, stuffing and shipments,” she explained.

“I think the key factor that differentiates my approach to business from the previous generation is that I listen to our

employees. I encourage and give them the confidence to take responsibility. Also, I hope to focus more on quality instead of quantity," she remarked.

Dynamic and forward-thinking, with a focus on employee empowerment and product quality, Poh is positioned as an inevitable force that will elevate Intergo Furniture to greater heights in the foreseeable future.

From Family Legacy to Global Innovation

Fostering growth through creativity and adaptability

At 25, Goh Song Pei, chief finance officer of Alian Furniture, seamlessly stepped into the family business.

From a young age, he was inspired by his father to sustain the rich legacy that his family had meticulously built.

Goh Song Pei is a dynamic leader in his family's furniture business. Upon graduating from the University of Liverpool at the age of 22, he joined the company and spearheaded transformative initiatives. With a forward-looking vision and a commitment to continued growth, he aspires to lead the company to new heights in the ever-evolving business landscape.

Goh first joined Alian Furniture, which specialises in particle board furniture and upholstery furniture, as a production planner. His focus was on streamlining and optimising the manufacturing processes to enhance efficiency and quality. He then moved to the sales department, working closely with clients and customers to grow the family business and expand it globally.

"I'm a person who's keen to learn and adapt to an evolving environment. So, when I joined the company three years ago, I involved myself in all sorts of business activities in order to master the necessary skills for each department," he shared.

Fostering fairness and open communication

In order to promote a positive and innovative work environment within the company, he always treated his employees equally as family members and

provided them with fair compensation, opportunities for career development and recognition.

"In my perspective, fostering open communication is crucial. I motivate my team to express their thoughts when encountering challenges. I also

“I’m a person who’s keen to learn and adapt to an evolving environment. So, when I joined the company three years ago, I involved myself in all sorts of business activities in order to master the necessary skills for each department.”

- Goh Song Pei



Alian Furniture

consistently urge them to be innovative and creative and to introduce fresh ideas, while providing a platform for implementation. This approach cultivates an atmosphere of continuous improvement," he said.

Realising that product innovation is crucial to staying relevant in the furniture industry, Goh decided to build a team that consistently innovates and creates different kinds of designs to adapt to the competitive market. This strategic initiative not only elevated the company's standing but also established its reputation as an innovative force in the industry.

The company also actively participated in international shows like MIFF to increase their exposure and attract potential distributors and buyers from various countries through unique and creative product designs.

Globalisation through digitalisation

Recognising the global shift toward digitalisation and the internet's pivotal role, Goh decided to join e-commerce platforms like Alibaba. "Doing so allows our customers to browse, select, and purchase furniture and upholstery products online without having to fly so


far away to meet us. This provides a convenient and user-friendly shopping experience, which, in turn, expands our customer base and increases sales," he explained.

"I firmly believe that a company should establish its own system to

enhance efficiency and consistency. This will reduce waste, minimise errors and ensure that operations run smoothly—distinguishing it from conventional factory management practices. Moreover, with significant advancements in machinery in recent years, decreasing reliance on manual labor has positively impacted our

company's growth trajectory. Through the implementation of these strategies, our business has become more agile, cost-efficient and capable of scaling while maintaining consistent quality and customer experiences," Goh asserted.

He added that he aspires to adapt to business changes, foster company growth, and uphold a positive image. "To achieve these goals, I will prioritise innovation in product design and development, diversify our portfolio to reduce dependence on a single market or product category, and actively shape our industry through creativity and adaptability," he continued.

"It might be too early to specify when I will officially take over the business, but I believe my dedication and passion for this industry will bring me closer to that point. Additionally, I hope the day for my father to retire and enjoy a well-deserved break will not be far off," Goh concluded. 

From Feathers to Pixels

Luxury Sleep's tales of resilience and modern approaches to mattress quality comfort

by Gloria D. Gamat

In any business, reputation and image matter. These factors could either make or break your brand. This is especially true for Luxury Sleep, Malaysia's premiere mattress maker. The company stood tall and kept its ground despite the hurricane of a pandemic that wreaked havoc on the country's furniture industry in recent years.

Under the helm of its second-generation owner, the visionary Mr. Leong Chin Hui, who has been steering the company forward into the future, the company successfully navigated through the challenges brought about by the recent pandemic—demonstrating resilience in the face of business pressures. While competitors in Malaysia used every strategy in the book to hold onto what was left of the market share, Mr. Leong stood his ground. He kept the company's reputation intact and stayed true to what the company stood for—Luxury Sleep, the innovator that has been manufacturing masterpieces of mattresses since 1973 for everyone's luxurious sleep.





“The buying power is still there. Pandemic or no pandemic, our customers remained loyal to the brand.”

– Ms. Zoe Liew, Assistant Sales Manager, Luxury Sleep

“The buying power is still there. Pandemic or no pandemic, our customers remained loyal to the brand,” Luxury Sleep’s assistant sales manager Ms. Zoe Liew shared during a recent interview with *Furnish Now*.

According to Ms. Liew, the Luxury Sleep factory continued operating with only minimum interruption during the pandemic. “He [Mr. Leong] stood firm. He could have lowered the prices because he produces everything, from raw materials... but he believes that customers are loyal to quality products. And so by upholding that quality and company reputation, he stood his ground and kept the company afloat and operating despite the pandemic,” she proudly shared.





Valuing customer preference

However, the customer preference can be seasonal, cultural, and, indeed, very personal. For instance, Ms. Liew pinpointed that European customers are more into soft mattresses, while Asians are more into medium to firm mattresses. Hence, it is important to analyse the data and dig deep into the metrics of the sales reports, she emphasised. “You cannot buy one now and change again tomorrow,” Ms. Liew explained.

That being said, one cannot really argue with the customer preference. Therefore, as Ms. Liew highlighted, listening to customer feedback and promptly addressing issues (if any) is the key.

A test of true quality mattress

Luxury Sleep is a renowned mattress manufacturer for well-known brands, such as Kingsdown, Hilker, Eclipse, Sleepmatics and many more. In total, the company’s name is associated with more than 17 brands, both in-house and internationally.

With a roster of high-quality brands in its portfolio, according to Ms. Liew, a huge percentage of their loyal clients buys mattresses for personal home use.

“It’s not something you buy or change every day,” she explained. “So if you buy one, you need to check the product thoroughly until you find the right one for you—the one that feels right for you. After all, it’s where you will sleep for at least 10 years,” Ms. Liew added.

During this part of the interview, Hans Christian Andersen’s literary fairy tale *The Princess and the Pea* comes to mind. What resonated most with many people was the part of the story where several layers of mattresses, stacked up to the ceiling, did not prevent the Princess from feeling the pea inserted beneath them. [This unique test served as a measure of her true royalty!]

But Ms. Liew’s takeaway from the fairy tale is that, those must have been really poor-quality mattresses! Understanding what your client wants and needs in this industry is of high importance, she explained.

“Being in the sales team, you do not only have to understand your customers and get to know them personally, but you also have to learn about product development and how to market the product,” she explained.

The power of customisation

“You can’t choose a mattress that you don’t like. You will suffer every day for 10 years, sleeping on a bed that’s not right. You don’t want to end up in a hospital bed! So, choose wisely,” she shared with banter.

In the mattress manufacturing industry, a spectrum of comfort levels encompassing varying degrees of softness and hardness, guides the production process. This customer-centric industry strives to cater to customer preferences, and this is especially crucial for a company like Luxury Sleep. In a market saturated with numerous competitors in Malaysia, standing out is imperative for success.

The incorporation of automation and artificial intelligence in mattress manufacturing intends to narrow the gap and make customer preferences more consistent and objective. “So that the difference in the level of preferred softness and comfort between two customers, for example, will not be as distinct as it used to be,” she explained.

In today’s contemporary world, finding the perfect mattress can be a daunting task. But what if there’s a tech or an app that would allow for the customisation of customer preferences? That’s where





Of springs and foams: Quality, sustainability and expertise – the Luxury Sleep difference!

Luxury Sleep is unwaveringly committed to crafting high-quality mattresses. The company has made substantial investments in cutting-edge machinery, ensuring that its production adheres closely to international standards, resulting in flawless mattresses.

The company proudly holds authorised OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturing) and exclusive sales rights for several top international mattress labels, establishing itself as the foremost manufacturer of the most sought-after mattress brands in the region. Within its expansive 300,000-square-foot manufacturing plant, Luxury Sleep demonstrates its capability to oversee the entire production process, from crafting individual components such as springs and foams to orchestrating the assembly of a complete mattress.

Luxury Sleep extends its expertise beyond OEM to include ODM (Original Design Manufacturing), offering a comprehensive service that empowers customers to forge distinctive brands of exclusive mattresses aligned with market demand. This all-encompassing service spans from aesthetic design and material selection to the meticulous manufacturing of mattresses—a seamless, one-stop process. By entrusting these responsibilities to Luxury Sleep,

bedMATCH® steps in. Powered by SleepertoLive, bedMATCH® is a cutting-edge diagnostic system exclusively offered at Forty Winks. Its patented technology is tailored to eliminate the confusion often associated with mattress shopping by matching individuals to a bed that suits their body type and unique sleep requirements. The application “scans” the mattress preference of Body A for example. Through the collection of individualised physical data, encompassing factors such as height, weight distribution and pressure points, the app is able to discern and recommend the optimal mattress tailored specifically to the body’s unique needs.

The customer simply has to lie down on the bed, and let bedMATCH® take care of the rest. Once the personalised results are received, the customer will be guided towards the ideal mattress that caters to the individual’s specific needs, and even considers your partner’s preference if you’re part of a couple.

The technology behind this app goes beyond the ordinary in providing scientific

recommendations tailored precisely for the customer. Leveraging cutting-edge technology, the comprehensive information collected is able to pinpoint the optimal mattress. This personalised approach takes into account not just the customer’s body type but also considers their unique sleep preferences and requirements, ensuring a tailored solution that enhances overall sleep experience. For couples with different preferences, the app will blend or integrate all the results to recommend a type of mattress that’s perfect for both bodies (A and B).

How’s that for addressing practical incompatibilities from the get-go? Indeed, the power of data seems to address the “pea problem” in this case.



bedMATCH® utilises cutting-edge technology, obtains measurements and conducts thousands of scientific calculations to pinpoint the optimal mattress suitable for any individual.

Exciting news awaits in the upcoming year (2024) as bedMATCH® becomes accessible at Luxury Sleep’s bed gallery in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. This innovative tool will empower customers to make informed choices for a truly customised and satisfying sleep experience.



customers can singularly focus on managing and growing their own brand with absolute peace of mind.

For those seeking a hassle-free business opportunity, Luxury Sleep provides the option to adopt its existing mattress brands under a brand licensing arrangement. This enables customers to exclusively feature these established brands as their own, streamlining marketing efforts and bolstering brand competitiveness. It's a pathway to a worry-free business venture, where Luxury Sleep's expertise becomes a strategic asset for cultivating successful and distinctive mattress brands.

"How come Luxury Sleep's mattresses come with premium price tags?" tops the company's FAQs (frequently asked questions).

Ms. Liew has the best analogy to address this: "Fast food burgers have less meat and are full of extenders. They aren't as filling, tasty and authentic as a homemade burger!" In Malaysia where numerous mattress manufacturers compete, Luxury Sleep distinguishes itself by prioritising quality over quantity. "You can feel the quality and recognise the top-level market it caters to is above the rest," she emphasised.

Furthermore, the company utilises sustainable and eco-friendly mattress components. It consistently prioritises

premium-quality products crafted from sustainable materials, bearing certifications such as Oeko-tex 100 and Eurolatex ECO-standard. These certifications ensure that Luxury Sleep's mattresses are free from harmful substances, promoting the well-being of both individuals and the environment.

Also, in their commitment to environmental responsibility, Luxury Sleep actively minimises energy consumption by incorporating state-of-the-art machinery with low-carbon emissions into their mattress manufacturing process. As an integral aspect of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility program, they advocate for the use of upcycled products, contributing to the betterment of underprivileged communities.

“You can't choose a mattress that you don't like. You will suffer every day for 10 years, sleeping on a bed that's not right. You don't want to end up in a hospital bed! So, choose wisely.”

– Ms. Zoe Liew, Assistant Sales Manager, Luxury Sleep

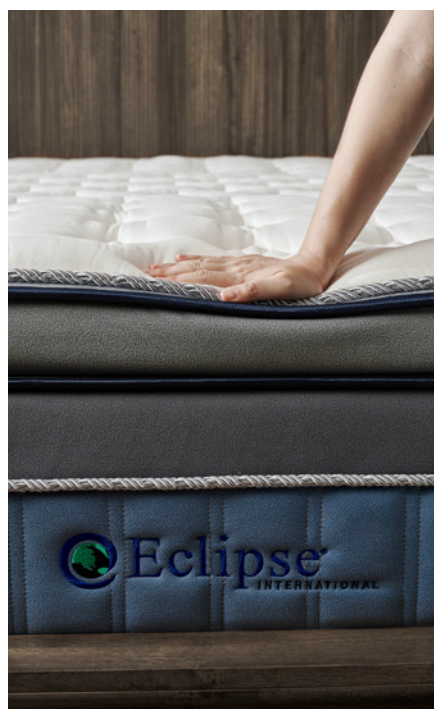
What the future holds

Anticipating the future, the endurance of Luxury Sleep surpasses the test of time. It stands resilient, poised to embrace the advancing landscape of technology. The integration of automation and artificial intelligence is set to elevate its manufacturing processes, ensuring a tailored approach that caters to the market's evolving demands and consistently delivers products of unparalleled quality, aligned with customer preferences.

For additional insights into Luxury Sleep and the comprehensive range of services, please visit www.luxurysleep.com.

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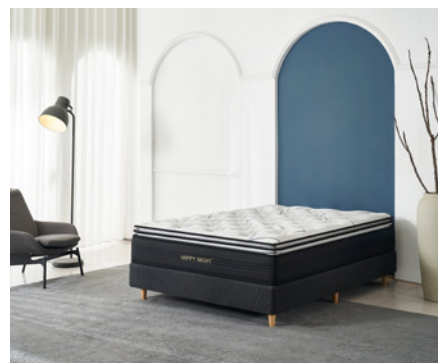
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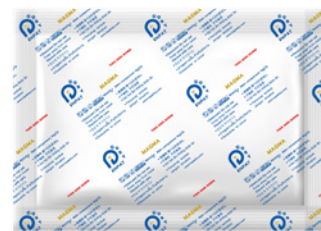
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Furnishing the Future

Spring Art Industries embraces change through innovative and daring initiatives

by Tan Sher Lynn

In the ever-changing landscape of the furniture industry, companies must evolve to meet market needs and demands. Spring Art Industries, a leading furniture manufacturer in Malaysia, did exactly this and embarked on a bold journey to invest in automation. This innovative move not only ensures efficiency but also paves the way toward a promising future.



“The furniture market, as it stands, is ready and waiting. All that is required is a more efficient supply chain.”

— Darius Lim

Founded in 1996 by husband-and-wife Jack Lim Kok Eng and Yvonne Kwan Chian Poh, Spring Art Industries is a prominent furniture export manufacturer headquartered in Muar, Malaysia. Its operations focus on producing and supplying ready-to-assemble (RTA) furniture for living rooms, bedrooms and offices to countries all over the world, including the United States, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and India.

Journey to Industry 4.0: A vision unfolding

Year 2023 marked a turning point for Spring Art when the couple's eldest son Darius Lim, the young and dynamic face of the company, stepped up to steer the company into Industry 4.0—a move set to reshape the landscape of their family business.

Darius Lim is a graduate of Arizona State University in the United States with a degree in business management. At 24 years old, he currently holds the position of chief business development officer at Spring Art Industries. He joined Spring Art in August 2022, initially focusing on marketing and learning about the operations in the factory. Lim was grateful for the opportunity to be involved in the furniture industry during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic as it provided him a chance to learn and thrive in a demanding environment. Since young, he had developed a keen interest in furniture manufacturing. Today, as he immerses himself in the industry, he finds his passion deepening and looks forward

to bringing Spring Art to new heights.

Lim joined Spring Art in August 2022 as a personal assistant but swiftly advanced to take charge of sales and office operations. In 2023, he took on the role of chief business development officer and since then, his passion for innovation is reshaping the company's trajectory.

According to Lim, a few years ago, there were plans to set up a third factory to increase their production. However, these

plans were put on hold when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In 2019, the company became publicly listed, securing over RM10 million in public funds, which were used for the construction of their new factory, Factory C.

Today, with the entire industry back in business, Spring Art's new factory is nearing completion and is set to begin operations in January 2024. What sets

Factory C apart from its other two existing factories (Factory A and B), is the fact that Factory C will be fully automated—a move that would significantly improve precision and cut down production time.

"The furniture market, as it stands, is ready and waiting. All that is required is a more efficient supply chain," Lim asserted.

Overcoming challenges post-COVID

When Lim started helping his parents in the company after graduating from the university in the United States, the world was just coming out of the pandemic and

the furniture market was slow. But this did not deter him from stepping up to improve things.

"During those times, we took proactive measures to enhance our quality control and restore operational efficiency, repair our machinery, implement inventory management, enforce rules and regulations, enhance employee discipline and optimise office systems.

“We are the first in Asia that invest in the CNC boring machine and the PVC machine, both of which can achieve staggering speed, thus accelerating the manufacturing process.”

- Darius Lim

These initiatives were in addition to our primary focus on managing orders effectively,” he shared.

To date, Spring Art is already operating at full capacity for both Factory A and Factory B, while Factory C is at the final stage of its construction and installation.

“I cherish the opportunity to have been involved in this sector when the market was at its worst. The

opportunity has allowed me to learn in a tough environment and I not only survived but also managed it effectively,” he said.

A paradigm shift: A to Z automation

Spring Art's bold step in investing in cutting-edge machinery and A to Z automation for their brand-new Factory C means that they would be able to drastically reduce the need for manpower, while at the same time ensuring high precision and efficiency.

“Ensuring precision is crucial in panel manufacturing; we cannot afford the same margin of error as in solid wood manufacturing. Without precision, assembling the product might become challenging,” Lim explained.

Also, with this new machinery, they will be utilising cloud-based systems and barcoding to streamline operations. “We can shorten production time by half using the barcode system compared to manually keying in the instructions. And with the A to Z automation, we can cut down almost half of the manpower needed,” he continued.

He further explained that the process of panel manufacturing involves the cutting machine, followed by the edging machine, the boring machine and finally the packing machine. “We are the first factory in Asia with software integrated machines. We have the CNC boring machine and edging machine, both of which can achieve staggering speed, thus accelerating the manufacturing process,” he added.



Lim emphasised that the inspiration for full automation was drawn from the automobile industry, where machines dominate production. "Using machines is more efficient and predictable. It's the future of manufacturing," he asserted.

Their endeavours, however, were not without challenges. The scarcity of technicians familiar with the advanced machinery and the lack of government subsidies necessitated innovative solutions. Lim emphasised the importance of skilled labour and the need to send personnel to Germany for specialised training.


Nonetheless, the company remains steadfast in its long-term vision amidst these challenges. There are even plans to implement automation efforts in all three factories according to phases, aiming for complete automation for the entire manufacturing process.

Lim emphasised the significance of this investment: "In mass production, profitability lies in efficiency. By reducing production time through automation, we not only increase efficiency but also enhance profits. Our new machinery, equipped with features like barcode readers and speed ageing, significantly cut down production time, making us more competitive in the market."

Soaring to new horizons

With the new factory set to be operational by January 2024 and automation becoming the foundation of their production process, Spring Art is not just keeping pace with the industry—they are setting the pace. The integration of tradition and innovation, family values and futuristic technology is propelling Spring Art into an era of unparalleled growth.

Spring Art's story is not just about automation; it's about a family's determination to navigate challenges and pioneer change in the industry. In the hands of visionaries like Darius Lim and his parents, Spring Art is not merely a furniture manufacturer; it's a testament to the enduring spirit of family businesses—embracing change and soaring to new horizons.

As they navigate the dynamic landscape of the industry, one thing is certain, Spring Art's future is as bright and promising as the new dawn they are ushering in. 



Get to Know Spring Art Industries

Spring Art's history can be traced back to 1996 with the incorporation of Spring Art Marketing by their managing director Jack Lim Kok Eng and executive director Yvonne Kwan Chian Poh.

Prior to this, Jack Lim had been involved in the business of selling personal computers to retail customers, as well as computer trading businesses for five years from 1991 to 1996. In addition to that, he sold computer desks to personal computer buyers.

In 1996, Lim and Kwan incorporated Spring Art Marketing to pursue opportunities in the furniture business. They started their business by way of trading and distributing ready-to-assemble computer desks in Muar, Johor.

Recognising the need for ready-to-assemble furniture in the market, they ventured into furniture manufacturing in 1999, changing their company's name from Spring Art Marketing to Spring Art Industries to reflect its manufacturing activities.

In 2019, Spring Art was listed on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia and secured over RM10 million in public funds. Nonetheless, the Lim family still holds the majority share with 70% ownership in the company.

Fast forward to today, with their son Darius at the helm, the company is taking a giant leap into the future by embracing new technology and innovation.

SPRING ART INDUSTRIES
www.springart.com
WTCKL, Hall 4B, Booth 4B12



Crown shyness phenomenon at the FRIM campus, a manmade forest

Forest Research Institute Malaysia strives for a more sustainable future through innovative timber solutions

by Chow Ee-Tan

Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM)—a renowned leader in tropical forest research and a valued contributor to global initiatives for conserving and sustainably managing forest ecosystems—focuses its research and development (R&D) and product development towards the sustainability of forestry materials, particularly timber, in the building industry. According to Dr. Sharmiza binti Adnan, the managing director of Product Certification Services (PCS) at FRIM, the institute is actively engaged in various sustainability programmes, which include a tree planting initiative, ongoing research and development into new raw materials, and the development of germplasm to ensure a sustainable and documented source of timber species, among others.

There is a growing trend in the building construction industry today towards using timber as an alternative to traditional materials, such as concrete and steel. One of the main reasons for this shift is the environmental impact of traditional construction materials like concrete, whose production is responsible for 8% of global CO₂ emissions.

"Timber is renewable and has a lower carbon footprint than other construction materials that consume a lot of fossil fuel energy to produce," said Dr. Sharmiza binti Adnan, Managing Director of Product Certification Services (PCS) at Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM). "It is also cost-effective, requires less time for assembly than traditional methods, produces less pollution to the environment, and consumes less natural materials from earth resources. In addition, its production takes less electricity and energy from other building materials."

FRIM, under the umbrella of Malaysia's Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (now known as Ministry of Natural Resources and Sustainability), is a premier research institution in Malaysia dedicated to the advancement of forestry and forest-related research, development, conservation, and commercialisation. The institute has

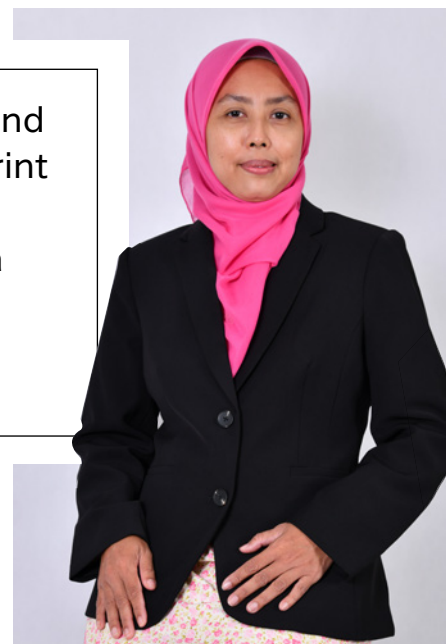
“Timber is renewable and has a lower carbon footprint than other construction materials that consume a lot of fossil fuel energy to produce.”

- Dr. Sharmiza binti Adnan

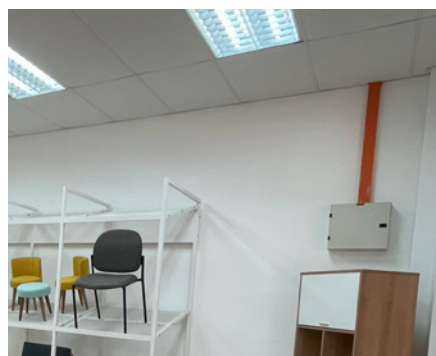
played a pivotal role in the development and management of Malaysia's forest resources, as well as in the promotion of sustainable forest management practices.

In an interview with *Furnish Now*, Dr. Sharmiza said there are several sustainability programmes being undertaken by FRIM. Among them are tree planting programmes, research and development into new raw materials, new product development, development of germplasm to ensure sustainable and documented sources of timber species, and development of demonstration forest plantations for various species in FRIM's research stations throughout Peninsular Malaysia—taking into consideration the types of soil and species suitability.

Dr. Sharmiza binti Adnan is the Managing Director of FRIM Product Certification



Services since 2020. She works closely with Mr. Hashim W. Samsi, head of Technical PCS and head of the product quality program at FRIM. Throughout more than 26 years of career in R&D, she has been involved in more than 50 research and consultancy projects, co-authored more than 70 publications and involved in more than 40 human capacity building programmes. She is also involved in various technical committees in standard development. Dr. Sharmiza is happily married with four kids and loves to cook during her free time.



Green Furniture Showroom at FRIM



Mr. Hashim W. Samsi, Head of Technical PCS and Head of Program Wood Product Quality, FRIM

On timber and sustainability

According to Dr. Sharmiza, sustainability has become the keyword when using timber as a building material.

"Wood is the only renewable construction material and can be found in every part of the world. It is an eco-friendly material that lowers the percentage of CO₂ emission in the atmosphere. Wood can replace other building materials which require a large amount of fossil fuel energy in their production," she explained.

"Timber is renewable, and can be sourced from sustainably managed forests or plantation forests. The supply is replenished as the material is used. Wood is a more environmentally friendly choice than materials like concrete and steel, which have a larger carbon footprint due to the energy required in production. Likewise, timber has a lower carbon footprint than these materials, as it absorbs and stores carbon dioxide while it grows," added Mr. Hashim.

Another advantage of the use of timber as a building material is its cost-effectiveness.

"Timber requires much less time for assembly than traditional methods associated with other building materials. Although, initially, the machinery used to process timber may be more expensive, the overall cost of timber building is often more economical than other building materials, i.e., concrete material," shared

Dr. Sharmiza. She added that the use of prefabricated timber will furthermore save a lot of time spent at construction sites, as the wood can be easily transported to the building site and assembled quickly.

Dr. Sharmiza said that contrary to popular belief, wood is actually processed in a way that it has insulating properties that prevent it from burning uncontrollably. Manufacturers or designers are able to create timber components that are resistant to fires.

"While there are concerns about the safety of timber structures, these can be addressed through proper design and construction techniques. As a construction material, timber offers a number of benefits that make it an attractive option for builders and homeowners alike. There are presently ongoing initiatives to reuse fallen logs and other tree parts for R&D in timber preservation, and these parts are also used to produce wooden furniture, souvenirs and other gift items," she added.

Some important timber quality traits for furniture application are stability (low expansion-shrinking), load-bearing strength, durability against degradation or pests and finishing properties.

"Nowadays, climate change is forcing us to conserve natural forest areas by reducing logging to a significant level. Thus, we have to concentrate our effort on helping the establishment of forest plantations as a sustainable source for the furniture industry and other wood-based

industries," she continued. She added that timber has the potential to be the future of the construction industry due to its sustainability, abundance, cost-effectiveness, time-saving and safety qualities if it is implemented properly.

"However, timbers from forest plantations usually do not have as good quality compared to natural forests. This is where FRIM's R&D plays an important role in improving the properties of forest plantation timbers until the timbers are suitable for furniture or other products," Dr. Sharmiza emphasised.

Advancing forestry R&D

From a few decades back, FRIM had initiated its R&D efforts to reduce dependency on timber from natural forests as a raw material for furniture. An example is its R&D on rubberwood in the 1980s, which allowed the properties of rubberwood timber to be improved to cater to furniture specifications accepted by domestic and foreign markets.

Dr. Sharmiza reckoned that future trends will be based on the development of advanced and latest technology. Thus, research on forestry needs to be intensified so that forest resources can be managed more effectively and efficiently. For its R&D on forestry and environment, FRIM has also developed technologies and provided solutions to support the sustainable management of resources and ecosystem services of the forest.

"FRIM's R&D is aligned to the chain-of-custody requirement in Malaysia's trade agreements and the Malaysia Policy on Forestry 2022 related to the sustainable utilisation of forest resources," she shared. Among the research carried out by its Forestry and Environment Division is the improvement of the existing forest management system for the second-growth forest, in terms of determining the optimum felling cycle, production rate and optimum growth stock. It was also found that the management of unique forests, such as peat swamp forest, kapur forest, seraya forest and hill meranti forest, needs to be more scientifically based.

However, because many forest areas have been converted to other uses, they are fragmented. In addition to that, damaged forests require effective and comprehensive restoration methods. Therefore, ecological and restoration



Verification of raw materials used and specifications of green furniture products by FRIM auditors



A sample undergoing testing at the FRIM Furniture Testing Laboratory

studies are necessary, said Dr. Sharmiza, stressing that basic studies involving ecological study and forest growth need to be continued.

"This is because the findings are very important in streamlining forest management, and the study also takes into account the effects and impacts of climate change on forests. Today, the conservation of biological diversity resources is not only focused on protected forests but also on production forests. Therefore, methods to ensure conservation in the production forest must also be produced through research," she further explained.

Engineered wood, high-temperature drying, as well as preservation and finishing based on nanotechnology are parts of R&D areas explored by FRIM to achieve the above objectives.

Dr. Sharmiza added that based on the current local and international requirements, forest resources need to be managed more effectively and intensively to achieve the goal of sustainable forest management. The future trend is more inclined to manage forests for forest services while managing timber production will continue to play an important role in some states. There is also ongoing R&D in timber preservation to reuse the fallen logs for both furniture and decorative items.

Green practices and awareness

With its strength in R&D, FRIM also wants to create awareness based on different areas of research. Recently, the institute organised a Green Furniture Symposium in Putrajaya on November 21 to 22, 2023. The symposium gathered stakeholders from various government agencies, furniture manufacturers associations, and researchers to provide an understanding of the importance of sustainable furniture development and certification from a social, economic and environmental context.

FRIM invited 15 renowned speakers to deliver papers from various perspectives, such as the current status of SDG achievement in Malaysia, the green furniture industry, sustainable raw materials, green government procurement, design, circular economy and experience sharing from industry players.

FRIM is also working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change in supporting the 2024 budget announcement through the endorsement of tree planting and environmental conservation projects. An Energy Saving Campaign is also underway at FRIM, utilising infographics and the Director General's circular to enhance awareness and appreciation among the FRIM community regarding the vital role of energy efficiency. This effort is important in ensuring that the country achieves

its targets and commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Other ongoing efforts include working in sync with the 12th Malaysia Development Plan 2021-2025 by developing green furniture products from the design stage, prototyping, testing and certification. Led by Mr. Hashim, in this project more than 100 new and improved designs have been completed, and some of the designs and prototypes are on display at the Furniture Gallery located in the MTDC Building at FRIM. 

Green Certification Scheme by FRIM



Forest Research Institute Malaysia

The establishment of FRIM Product Certification Services (FRIM PCS) in 2013 aimed to help local industry in manufacturing products with consistent quality—ensuring the wood-based industry meets the specifications and standards determined by stakeholders and users, and aligned with the standard requirements of local and international markets.

FRIM PCS now offers several certification schemes, which include furniture, fire resistance doors, authentication of herbal raw materials and paper products. In December 2014, FRIM was accredited by the ISO/IEC 17065 Conformity Assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services from the Department of Standards Malaysia as the eighth product Certification Body (CB) in Malaysia. Standards Malaysia is recognised by 97 global accreditation bodies participating in the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) in addition to 81 Pacific Accreditation

Member Countries Cooperation (PAC). As a Standards Malaysia accredited CB, customers with products certified by FRIM are eligible for double tax deduction under Section 34(6)(ma) Income Tax Act 1967 (Act 53).

The Green Certification Scheme offered by FRIM PCS covers several products, namely furniture, doors, handicrafts, and paper products. This green certification comes with criteria, such as sustainable raw materials, product performance, safety, durability, and health. Product quality is tested against international and/or industrial standards, such as British Standard (BS), European Norms (EN), American Standards (ASTM/ANSI) and the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA).

In terms of material and health requirements, the Green Furniture Certification Scheme offered by FRIM takes into account global requirements, such as the European ecolabel, FEMB - European Federation of Office Furniture and BIFMA. This ensures that furniture certified under this scheme also fulfils global requirements.

For further information on certification, visit pcs.frim.gov.my or by sending an email to pcs@frim.gov.my.

(Source: FRIM PCS)



**MALAYSIAN
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Your MIFF 2024 Journey Guide

Prepare your checklist:

- ☒ Register as visitor at www.miff.com.my.
- ☒ Book your hotel.
- ☐ Redeem Buyers' Night ticket @ International Buyers' Lounge.
- ☐ Navigate the MIFF 2024 Exhibitor List for an effective furniture sourcing experience.
- ☐ Complete your sourcing journey by visiting 2 show venues: MITEC & WTCKL.
- ☐ Redeem Exclusive Gift: Complete the survey or accept a video interview.



Non-stop shuttle services are available between two venues: MITEC & WTCKL.



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