

# furnish



The official magazine of the  
Malaysian International Furniture Fair

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Cover Story

## 'Em-Barking' Towards Sustainability

page 10

Spotlight

## The Age of The Millennials

page 07

Special Report

## Furniture Industry 4.0

page 33

# Letter to Readers

## In Anticipation of Another Record-Breaking Show at MIFF 2020

If the success of MIFF 2019 is any indication of the future, MIFF 2020 will certainly be the biggest and best show yet. And now, as 2019 comes to close, our efforts are focused on making the upcoming show, which will be held from March 6 to 9, a memorable and profitable event for all involved.

Already, we have confirmation from many exhibitors, who will showcase their latest designs. (Check out *Fabulous Furniture* on page 17 for a sneak peek!) As the top show of the year, don't miss out on your opportunity to join us for this exciting event!

This issue also includes key stories of utmost importance to today's furniture industry.

Taking a look at the stories in this issue of *Furnish Now*, it's clear that the Malaysian furniture industry is a major player, with MIFF as its biggest platform for making worldwide connections and sales. This is bolstered by support from the Government, including initiatives like the designation of 'Muar Furniture Park', which aims to attract more than RM1 billion in investments, as well as the creation of more than 10,000 jobs (see the story on page 38).

Malaysian furniture continues to appeal to buyers, both regionally and around the world. With a focus on timber products – especially rubberwood – buyers have been snapping up Malaysian designs.

In our *cover story*, we take a look at how the timber industry is focusing on sustainability in order to continue its growth in the most environmentally friendly way possible (for more, turn to page 10).

Another important area in the industry concerns the rise of the next generation of designers. MIFF continues to nurture young talent through a variety of initiatives: This includes the popular Millennials@Design (MAD) showcase, as well as the Furniture Design Competition, or FDC Awards. Through fresh ideas and a keen focus on innovation, younger designers will surely play a role in shaping the future of the Malaysian furniture industry (page 7).

And...let us not forget that most important change happening in our industry, a "revolution"! Read all about it in the *Special Report* (page 33).

Finally, a big thank you to all of our supporters – from the manufacturers, to the designers, buyers and government-based initiatives – we couldn't do it without you.

We hope that you enjoy this issue – and as always, we value and appreciate your continued support.

Best wishes,

KAREN GOI  
General Manager, MIFF

## CONTENTS

**03 MIFF Update**  
MIFF Wins Inaugural 'Malaysia Iconic Event Award'

**07 Spotlight**  
The Age of the Millennials

**10 Cover Story**  
'Em-bark-ing' Towards Sustainability: A Closer Look at the Timber Industry

**17 Fabulous Furniture**  
A Sneak Peek to MIFF 2020 Exhibition Showcase

**33 Special Report**  
Furniture Industry 4.0

**38 InFocus**  
Muar Furniture Park: Malaysia's Furniture Hub of the Future



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# MIFF Wins Inaugural 'MALAYSIA ICONIC EVENT AWARD'

*Furniture exports increase  
from same time last year*

*by Brooke Herron, Furnish Now editor*

The Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) recently won 'The Malaysia Iconic Event Award' for its success in creating a highly valuable industry, both nationally and regionally, measured by both economic contribution and overall impact. MIFF was also recognised for its innovative and creative elements in planning and execution, as well as in marketing, sales and branding, stakeholders and client services management.

News of MIFF winning the award was prominently featured on an electronic billboard in New York City's famous Times Square.

The award was presented during the inaugural Malaysia Business Awards (MBEA) 2019 in Kuala Lumpur this past October and was from the Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers (MACEOS). MIFF is organised by UBM Malaysia, a part of Informa Markets, and is the largest and most global event of its kind in Southeast Asia.

MIFF General Manager Ms. Karen Goi said: "MIFF is honoured to be recognised the voice of Malaysia's business events industry. Over the years, we have worked hard to raise the profile of MIFF and Malaysia as a global procurement hub and built strong relationships with the furniture industry in Malaysia and across the world. This prestigious award is a tribute to our trade partners and valued customers for their continuing trust and confidence in MIFF and adds another milestone to our 25th anniversary this year."

Ms. Goi, along with Acting President of Muar Furniture Association (MFA) Mr. Christopher Yau, were onstage to receive the award from guest-of-honour Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister YB Dr. Ong Kian Ming. MIFF and MFA have shared a strategic partnership since 2013.

"MIFF provides a great platform for us to engage with buyers from 140 countries, which would not have been possible without it. The country has built a reputation as a trusted global furniture producer, with quality products for all types of furniture," said Mr. Yau.

Continuing his praise for MIFF, he said: "MFA is proud to play a role in the success of MIFF, which continues to deliver world class organisation and excellent value. We are good working partners in our common goal to elevate the Malaysian furniture industry. This accolade is a culmination of MIFF's commitment and effort to be a meaningful partner to local furniture companies."







## US-China 'trade war' creates opportunities for Malaysian companies

News of MIFF's award comes on the heels of another opportunity for the Malaysian furniture industry: the current trade war between the U.S. and China. As buyers seek alternative sources, many are turning to Malaysia – Asia's third largest furniture producer behind China and Vietnam. In the first five months of 2019, Malaysian furniture exports increased by 9.16% to a value of US\$990 million, compared to the same time last year. The best performing products at MIFF 2019 were seats with wood frames (24.1% growth); metal furniture (16.9%); wood bedroom furniture (14.8%); other wood furniture (8.6%); and kitchen furniture (6.8%).

As the largest single importer, the U.S. market captured a chunk of Malaysia's exports with orders by U.S. retailers up by 20.8% (US\$327 million). Meanwhile, exports to Canada rose by 25.7%. According to the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), this expansion signals a

possible import diversion by American buyers who may be shifting their orders to countries in Southeast Asia.

Buyers Ms. Cynthia Bao and Mr. Jack Ying from Welland Industries in the U.S. attended MIFF for the first time in 2019 to find suppliers from other Asian countries due to the U.S.-China trade war and said they were seeking "eco-friendly materials and designs to suit our organic, rustic brand".

This trend is not only evident in the numbers but has also been witnessed first-hand by MIFF exhibitors.

Mr. Harry Chew, the sales and marketing director for Omega Sofa, says they've received a lot of enquiries and factory visits from the U.S. since 2018. "Before this, our main market was Asia-Pacific . . . and definitely there are more U.S. buyers expected at MIFF next year," he shared, adding that Omega Sofa plans to have a bigger booth to create a segment for the U.S. market at MIFF 2020.

"More markets are now looking to Malaysia," said Mr. Julian Choo, export manager for Decortage, adding that at MIFF 2019, they had American buyers visiting their booth and asking about

products. "This is an opportunity to us to build a presence in the U.S. with our bedroom furniture. We will be bringing more to MIFF next year."

Chuanheng Furniture Products General Manager Mr. Lew Choon Hwee believes there will be a lot of U.S. buyers at MIFF 2020. "North America accounts for 80% of our international sales, and we have the capacity to take on more orders," he shared.

Indeed, the increase in U.S. buyers was clear at MIFF 2019, with a 53% increase over the year prior.

MFA Secretary-General Mr. Nick Wee agrees that the trade war is a positive thing for Malaysian furniture makers – and in Muar, many manufacturers are already expanding. "I believe, since January, many have invested considerably to purchase new machinery to set up new factories," he said. "We saw a lot of American buyers at MIFF this year (2019) . . . they made factory visits and placed orders. There were also increased buyers from Europe, Canada, Australia and South Korea and I expect more will come in 2020."

According to Mr. Wee, rubberwood has also become accepted among international buyers – and they've started asking for it. "The supply of rubberwood is no longer an issue, we have enough. The message is we are ready," he said.

To sustain the raw material for the industry, the Malaysian government approved the planting of 62 acres (25,000 hectares) of forest plantation in 2005, each year for 15 years. Once mature, each of these 62 acres can yield 5 million cubic metres of timber, with the first project slated to mature in 2021.

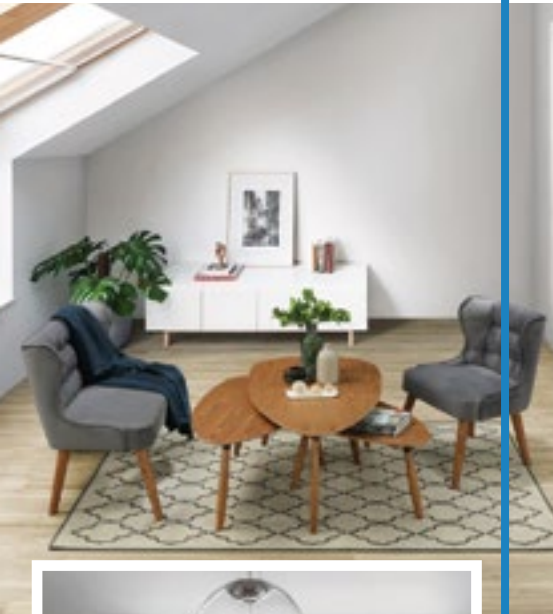
But before that happens, MIFF 2020 will be here – and one this is for certain, this award-winning event will continue to impress, while serving as a valuable platform for the continued growth and prosperity of the Malaysian furniture industry.

**"This prestigious award is a tribute to our trade partners and valued customers for their continuing trust and confidence in MIFF."**

**-Ms. Karen Goi, MIFF General Manager**

**MIFF 2020, 6-9 March**  
MITEC & PWTC

For more information or to register, visit [www.miff.com.my](http://www.miff.com.my)



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# The Age of the Millennials

*How this generation is changing the furniture industry*



**Dr. Eric Leong** is a design celebrity with 29 years of experience. He is popular for a series of lifestyle shows aired on both Malaysian and Singapore television and known as the “King of Decoration”. He is currently the Head of Interior Design at The One Academy, a leading art and design college in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Principal of its Penang campus. He is also the chief judge of MIFF Furniture Design Competition 2020 and an expert on ‘Millennial Consumer’ study. [Email: [ericleong2@gmail.com](mailto:ericleong2@gmail.com)]

*by Tan Sher Lynn, Furnish Now writer*

**W**ith the spending power of Baby Boomers and Generation X declining, a new force is rising: Millennials. Born between 1981 and 1996 (and currently 23 to 38 years old), they are quickly becoming the most important consumer group in most types of businesses, including furniture.

## New force rising

According to Pew Research Center, currently, Millennials are the largest generation in the US labour force (at 35%). It is even more so in Malaysia, where Millennials make up about 50% of the workforce, according to *ResearchGate*. Due to their high buying power, it's vital for businesses to understand this group of consumers in order to meet their expectations on products and experience.

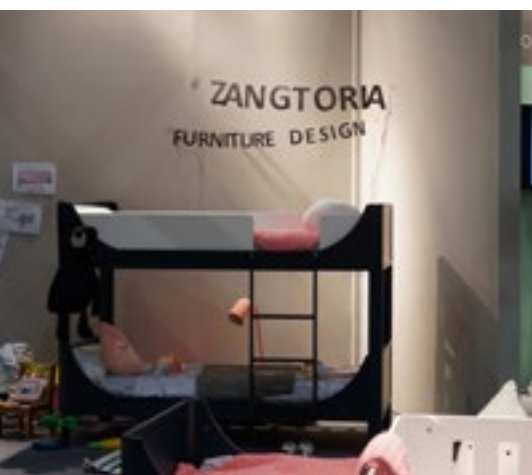
According to celebrity designer Dr.

Eric Leong, Millennials are a unique age group. They are exposed to a lot of information, through social media, influencers and other means on the Internet, unlike the previous Generation X and Baby Boomers, who had limited access to information. This exposure shaped their character, making them more vibrant, outspoken, open to new things and ideas, and with a penchant for gadgets and technology.

On the other hand, Dr. Leong noted, most furniture manufacturers in Malaysia belong to Generation X and tend to be more conservative and not yet ready to take the road less travelled.

“Manufacturers need to be aware of the growing market of Millennial consumers. To navigate the Millennial consumer market, manufacturers need to be innovative. Something that is fresh, fun, easy-to-operate and incorporated with technology, like an app-controlled massage chair or a chair with built-in speakers, will appeal to this group of consumers,” emphasised Dr. Leong.





themselves known to the industry.

Since 2010, MIFF has been organising the Furniture Design Competition (FDC) annually to celebrate the creative spirit of design and uncover young talent to support Malaysia's thriving furniture industry. Meanwhile, the Millennials@Design (MAD), held for the first time in 2018, acts as a permanent showcase to increase the global visibility of young Malaysian designers and help them build valuable connections within the international marketplace.

"Connecting young designers with furniture manufacturers is definitely a main goal of FDC and MAD," said Dr. Leong, who is also the chief judge of FDC.

"By showcasing fresh and new designs from private studios and freelancers, MAD brings forth inspiration and acts as a bridge between Millennial designers and the industry, with the goal of increasing their visibility so that their work can be seen and purchased by international buyers, and that they can build meaningful relationships with manufacturers," he said.

In 2020, MAD will be held on a bigger scale with the participation of previous FDC winners, some of whom are already selling their designs in the market and are working closely with industry players. So, be sure to save the date for MIFF 2020 and see the exciting works of Millennial designers for yourself!

"Meanwhile, durability is less of a concern for them as they like to change their furniture often. The minimalist Scandinavian style, however, remains as popular as ever. And there's a preference for soft furnishings and pastel colours, over hard furnishing like steel," he said.

In terms of Millennial designers, Dr. Leong believes their skills are on par with international standards. "The majority of Millennial designers nowadays have been through quality education and possess critical thinking skills, but lack experience in the real-life manufacturing process," noted Dr. Leong. "For example, they may be able to draw beautifully, but they don't really understand the material. This hurdle can be overcome by working with the manufacturer. It would be great to form associations and organise meet-ups between manufacturers and designers to discuss ideas, since many manufacturers lack innovative and fresh design input, which young designers can offer," he explained.

### Bridging designers and manufacturers

Recognising the crucial role of the Millennials in defining the future of the furniture market, the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) – the largest furniture trade fair in the region – has come out with various initiatives to support and develop Millennial designers, acting as a platform for them to showcase their designs and make





## A Young Designer's Perspective

**F**urniture designer Jasper Lee has been participating in FDC every year since 2016. "MIFF has provided a great platform for designers to work with manufacturers. Through MIFF, we are able to obtain great exposure to the furniture industry and meet with international buyers," he said.

"In 2019, Millennial designers collaborated with the exhibitors and manufacturers introduced by MIFF. I produced a design collection for the manufacturer, and the experience was invaluable. Throughout the process I was able to understand more about the industry and learnt to see things from the manufacturer's perspective," he shared.

"This year, we initiated the move of the MAD exhibition into the hall. We defined what MAD is all about – a platform for local designers to showcase their furniture, a place to gather talents, a place for exhibitors to look for collaboration, and a place for visitors to search for products.

"Throughout the years of participating in MIFF, we have grown to be more mature and familiar with the industry. We learnt how to manage a design project, propose an idea to the manufacturer, look into problems and find solutions, and set achievable targets so that both designer and manufacturer can reach their respective goals – such as searching for new markets; finding new products to offer to current customers to generate more sales; and how to increase the efficiency and capacity of the manufacturing lines," he explained.

Lee noted that, as a young designer, it is often a challenge when proposing new ideas to manufacturers, especially to the older generation who are skilled in product-making and pricing. "Due to their long experience in the industry, it is often difficult for them to see new possibilities. I need to provide lots of references to convince them to try

new things. It takes time for a young designer to get familiar with the industry, and it takes effort to show manufacturers the importance of design."

According to Jasper, the design of a piece of furniture is very important to Millennial consumers as everyone wants to be unique and stand out from the crowd. "Millennials are exposed to tons of information through social media and the internet where ideas are easily shared and accessed. To cater to them, a product must be honest and flexible. There must also be options for them to choose from."

He continued to say that Malaysia's strong foundation in furniture manufacturing has made the country a leading furniture exporter in Southeast Asia, especially in terms of OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer). "The OEM to OBM transformation is a trend not limited to the furniture industry but ongoing in the entire manufacturing arena. In China, for example, many companies have evolved from OEM to ODM, then OBM (Original Brand Manufacturing).

"Through MAD, we aim to promote OBM as we have limited numbers of OBM furniture manufacturers in this country due to the fact that many of them are unable to afford proper R&D facilities. This is why we decided to form MAD Associate, to offer a series of design services to manufacturers to improve product design and development, eventually leading to the realisation of OBM hopefully," he said.



**Jasper Lee** is a multi-discipline designer and an educator, with vast experience in the field of product, furniture, commercial and residential interiors, events and exhibition design. He holds a master's degree from the Coventry University, majoring in Industrial Design. His designs reflect a balance between practicality and aesthetics, with an emphasis in details and fine craftsmanship, strongly influenced by his background in industrial product design. His works often celebrate the simplicity of forms and materials and are oriented towards human-centred designs and daily essentials. Jasper is also one of the project managers for MAD in 2020. [Email: leejian kang@hotmail.com]



**Left:** Some of the logs awaiting transportation to the inspection station at the *matau* of Lepar Forest Reserve in Maran, Pahang.  
**Bottom:** Sorted PEFC-certified wood at One-Tech's green factory in Kuala Lumpur.



# 'Em-bark-ing' Towards Sustainability: A Closer Look at the Timber Industry

*A report from the MTC Media Familiarisation Trip*

by Joanna Lee, *Furnish Now* writer

**W**ealth is standing in Malaysian forests. It's beyond the RM23.2 billion total worth of wood and wood products, including furniture and wood panel products exported in 2017, and the fact that Malaysia is the eighth largest furniture exporter in the world. It's about the richness of our forest's heritage, preserving the beauty of our environment, and sustaining the wood and furniture industry.

To help stakeholders in the timber and furniture industry understand the efforts undertaken to ensure that the next generation can inherit and still enjoy our forests, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) invited members of the media, including *Furnish Now* for a sneak peek into the industry's ecosystem and processes (upstream and downstream) to see what has been done to ensure its sustainability. The council was set up under the Ministry of Primary Industries with a mandate to market and promote Malaysian timber

products globally.

"The industry is going through a transformation and we're trying to work with them [the industry] so that the landscape will further grow to support the industry," said MTC's CEO Mr. Richard Yu, during a briefing at the start of our trip.

One of the things Mr. Yu highlighted was the timber industry's "3D's" label. "We want to be known as 'Discovery, Delightful and Desirable'," he said. "This means the industry is always in a discovery mode to come up with products, which always delight consumers and as a result, anything related to wood in Malaysia would become a magnet and be desirable. This would be a departure from what people would know as 'dirty, dangerous and demeaning'" he explained.

At the meeting, we also met with Mr. Mohd Yusoff Ismail from the Licensing and Inspectorate Division of the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB). He explained MTIB's role in the industry, which includes ensuring that no illegal logging occurs, and

shared interesting facts about the Malaysian timber industry.

After the warm welcome from MTC's team and meeting with Mr. Mohd Yusoff Ismail, we departed for the first stop of our trip where we discovered a glimmer of hope that could pave the way for the 'delightful' and 'desirable' aspect of the 3D's strategy.

We entered the compound of One-Tech (M) Sdn Bhd. The vibrant 26-year-old family-run business is situated on a 13,000 sq. ft. factory. Every aspect of their company is a model of green manufacturing practices, a testament to their 2013 mission of being a world-class green lifestyle solutions provider, with the aim of putting sustainability right at the core of their company.

Company Director Mr. Harith Ridzuan, also known as Harith the Green Carpenter (HGC) said, "We're not a company producing green products, but we're a green company involved in the manufacturing of products."



## Certifications based on sustainably sourced timber

These products include green furniture; interior fit out; products made from raw sustainable eco-materials such as Malaysian-produced bamboo planks, rubberwood and kenaf; and homeware and décor items, all under five eco brands (of which three are patented). They are also ISO-certified with the latest PEFC certification. (PEFC is an international umbrella organisation that endorses national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions.)

While at One-Tech, we also met Malaysian Timber Certification Council Senior Manager (Forest Management) Ms. Siti Syaliza Mustapha and Product Manager Ms. Sabrina Haji Mawasi, who explained the council's role in promoting sustainable forest management. The MTCC runs the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS), which is endorsed by PEFC and allows MTCC to grant the important "Chain of Custody" certification for timber and timber products, which could then carry the PEFC logo.

Mr. Harith said when he first started out in the industry, he had noticed the problem of waste in the manufacturing

processes and said he had to do something about it. "We decided to take action and be the change," he shared. Using the 5S and LEAN management system to reduce waste and increase efficiency, they have managed to reduce their wood waste from 30 percent to just 5 percent this year.

Looking around the factory, we noticed they work with pellets and salvaged wood from old buildings to be repurposed, plantation wood like rubber and acacia, and other sustainable wood. They are also involved in R&D. For their homeware brand Dapo, OTSB won the Japanese Good Design Award 2018 and had the opportunity to display their product at the Good Design Marunouchi store in Tokyo.

One-Tech also invests in the next generation of talent in the wood product industry through its Teaching Factory, which trains about 20 students from different backgrounds each year in a two- to six-month internship.

"We try not to be the bad 3D's," Mr. Harith chuckled. "We don't want to be seen as the last resort for employment, but we want to attract high quality graduates to this industry and make the wood manufacturing sector as appealing," he added.

With their family-friendly factory compound and impressive, thoughtful

designs, One-Tech's ambition to go global seems set on the course forward.

The furniture industry can take a leaf out of One-Tech's experience in thinking how to solve sustainability issues, reducing waste and creating a legacy worth passing down to the next generation while sharing generously. For Mr. Harith, there seems to be no fear of ideas or resources running out as they work hard not only for their own but for the community and ultimately, industry's good.

Next, we made our way out of Kuala Lumpur towards Kuantan, Pahang.

**Top:** One-Tech aims to attract more youths to the industry by its internship programme and a factory thriving on sustainable practices and innovative designs.

**Bottom:** One-Tech's office is a showcase of its penchant for natural design and repurposing of material to reduce wastage.







### Up close: How we manage our forests

Rain drizzled down from cloudy skies as we drove towards Hutan Simpan Lepar. We were greeted by sights of gigantic cut tree trunks resting horizontally at a vast clearing known as a *matau*, an area where logs are collected to be transported to their next destination.

Here on the muddy clearing, Kuantan/Pekan/Maran District Forest Officer Mr. Ismail Ali Kamarudeen walked us through how they practice Selective Management System (SMS), an intricate, yet systematic process, in which the forestry department works with loggers on a system of accountability.

The SMS system means the forest manager is responsible to ensure the concessionaires who log at the permitted area, only at Permanent Reserved Forests (PRF), fulfil the requirements before, during and after harvesting the logs.

We endured a short, but exhilarating, four-wheel drive to the logging area, with wheels threatening to slide on the rain-kissed mud roads.

Alas, we didn't get to witness how they cut the trees as the loggers couldn't work at all, due to the heavy rainfall in the past few days. Nevertheless, Mr. Ismail said we could still see the logging work area inside the forest reserve.

"SMS means this area has been given a permit for logging," said Mr. Ismail. SIRIM also audits them before their permit is granted or extended for a period of time. He added that as long as the permit is valid, Pahang timber would qualify as PEFC worthy for export to European countries.

### Pre, during and after cutting

The arduous pre-felling inventory task has showed that there were 176 "mother" trees here and 88 protected trees — fruiting trees or trees that are habitat for animals like bees, for instance. The best four "mother" trees per hectare are chosen for the next generation or rotation of 25 to 30 years. They provide the "anak" or baby trees.

The SMS system also means the need to ensure the direction of the felling to ensure the least damage to other trees.

"After logging, we will immediately have to plant new trees along the way,



**Top Left:** Mr. Ismail pointing to a Merawan Jangkang 'mother tree' which has a blue tag in the permitted logging area while Mr. Saiful takes a snapshot

**Top Right:** Pahang State Forestry Officer Mr. Ismail, 2nd from left, introducing Head of Gambang Inspection Station Mr. Nasir, 2nd from right and his deputy, Mr. Sharizal, right

**Bottom Right:** Muddy roads leading to the logging at Lepar Forest Reserve in Pahang

even at the log holding areas like this one you saw, all under the SMS system," he said.

He pointed to a map of the licensed logging area and an information summary of the area, the name of the licensed company, the contractor, estimated taxes to be collected from the logs, number of tags for different species. For this area, we saw that an estimated 367 damar trees have been tagged or designated for logging.

Trees cannot be cut and won't be tagged if the diameter is less than the stipulated number for each species according to their inventory and census of the area's availability of matured trees marked for cutting. For instance, the Chengal tree's trunk must not be below 70 cm in diameter (at chest height). For trees with resin (dipterocarps), the



diameter limit is 60 cm and 50 cm for non-resin trees.

Mr. Saiful Azmi Mat Aazid who heads the tagging and grading unit in that area patiently explained how they colour code the tagged standing trees. Blue for mother trees, yellow for protected species trees, white for trees permitted for logging and orange for trees that need to make way for the transporting roadway inside the forest.

He said, "There are 10 species which are under the 'red list', the endangered species which cannot be cut including keruing laying, padi, paya and meranti quantinesis, which won't be tagged at all."

Mr. Ismail told us how the forestry department monitored the concessionaires: "We periodically monitor, but it's monthly for (shorter period) licenses like these, we check their logging boundaries, the trees that they have felled, their workers, workers' quarters, the roads they have made for transportation and the environment of the permitted logging area.

Pahang has about 70 licensees per year on average, including those on government and private land.

If a forest has already been

harvested before (non-virgin forest), logging is limited to 75 sqm per hectare for standing trees.

## Tracing the tree logs: Gambang Inspection Station

At the mobile checking station or tree inspection station, its purpose is to check for the correct amount of taxes received by the state government from the licenced loggers against the number of logs logged. Simple? It looks like a complicated process but rest assured, Mr. Mohamad Nasir, the head of this inspection station at Gambang, has been at it for decades.

He showed us the "sistem integrasi maklumat perhutanan" (SIMP) or Integrated Forest Information System programme online, where how much tax has been paid for the logs is captured.

Once the lorries with logs arrive from the *matau*, they measure the logs. After measuring, they check if the numbers match with a logbook that has an inventory of all the trees in the permitted logging area.

"They'll then take the invoice, check the tagging record, go to the lorry, inspect the lorry and measure the

logs, and enter the information into the system. If everything tallies, they will hand over an authorised hammer to the company to mark their logs. Taxes are implemented according to the species of the tree," Mr. Saiful explained.

Mr Ismail told us the Pahang State Forestry Department is in the process of testing and launching a new system called "Teknolog", where on each log, there will be a QR code so it can be scanned for immediate information of each log. The tagging number would indicate the tree's species and size.

Currently, they have to measure each and every log at the inspection station, a time-consuming task. "With Teknolog, the onus is shifted to the concessionaire to measure the logs. If measurements are found wrong, they will be fined. So, we only need to measure 10 percent of each batch for counterchecking measures. If there are 30 logs, we'll just measure 3 logs, for example. This is to ensure the right taxes are collected for the trees logged under license," Mr. Kamarudeen said.

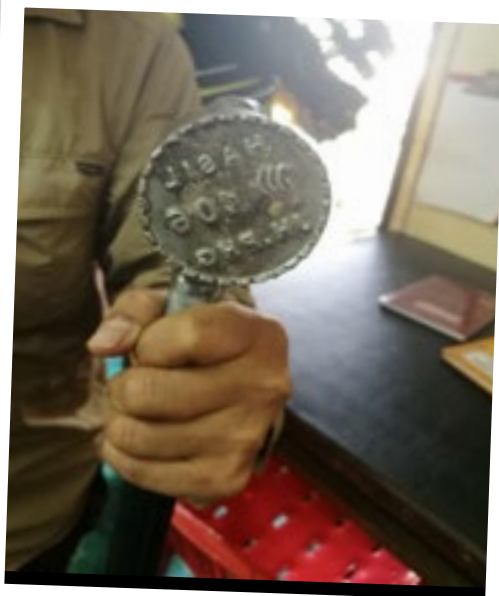
We saw how much of a paper trail they had. It's a process which involves careful inventory and counterchecking with expertise, to identify those majestic, beautiful living trees, training for cutting trees, and more counterchecking thereafter as state taxes and permits are involved.

As we sit on wooden chairs, looking at wooden panels, cupboards and floorings, we could imagine this is what trees and the people who manage them go through. Furniture industry players can also play a more active role in making sure the selective forest management system won't be abused and to keep encouraging best practices while taking opportunities to engage more and keep up-to-date with timber news, for instance, through MTC and other relevant bodies. No timber, no furniture. And this is a responsibility for all involved.

With that, we then digested what an intricate system the SMS was over lunch and headed towards HLM Wood Products Sdn Bhd.

**Top:** One of many log books and the authorisation hammer to be given to concessionaires to brand logs after taxes and inspections are cleared.

**Right:** The authorisation hammer given to stamp logging concessionaires logs once taxes and inspections are cleared.



## Is the industry looking at a sunset?

Back in Kuala Lumpur, we gathered before the Malaysian Timber Conference welcoming dinner for a debriefing to conclude our familiarisation trip.

We saw the great effort taken by each factory and player in the industry to step up to sustainability challenges. Malaysian timber and wood products are mostly exported. They are of international quality and beautifully designed as evident One-Tech, HLM Wood Products, Robina Flooring. The high production capabilities and efforts in innovations and sustainability shown by Maran Sawmill and Mentakab Veneer and Plywood are also noteworthy.

Mr. Yu surmised what we witnessed in a few points: There's awareness that our raw materials are dwindling or face an inconsistent supply. Thus, there

have been programmes to sustain the environment and production . . . even bringing in raw materials from overseas.

Nevertheless, the many factories we saw face human resource problems. Although Mr. Yu said sectors like furniture have many second-generation successors groomed, overall, we are still relying on foreign workers, hence there's a need for the industry to look towards automation, especially in the light of Industry 4.0 and a need for highly skilled workers. There's also a mismatch between what is taught at universities, and what is in the real world, in order to meet the industry's needs.

Mr. Yu said for the industry to embody the 3D's – be desirable, have discovery and be delightful – we have to be convinced about it ourselves. He emphasised the need to look into solutions together.

If we could help consumers of furniture and wood products to

appreciate the value of trees and the hard work that goes behind producing every item, how would this add value to the furniture industry products, innovations and services? From the success of the factories we saw, it seems that to create something of value is a long term growth mindset, an investment that goes beyond merely making some profit for today.

However, MTC remains optimistic and committed in their programmes to assist the industry's continued growth. "They said the industry is a sunset industry, but the sun will rise after it sets," said Mr. Yu.

**Editor's Note:** Organised in conjunction with the MTC Malaysian Timber Conference, the 2019 Familiarisation Programme for Local Journalists was held on July 22 to 25 in Peninsular Malaysia.



**Top Left:** The VIPs standing together with the 10 conference speakers

**Top Right:** From left - Mr. Wong, Mr. Ravi Muthayah, YB Mdm. Kok, Dato' Low, Mr. Yu

**Bottom Left:** Dato' Low Kian Chuan delivering his welcome speech at the Malaysian Timber Conference 2019

**Bottom Center:** Minister of Primary Industries YB Mdm. Teresa Kok with opening remarks at MTC 2019

**Bottom Right:** Datuk Seri Shamsul delivering the keynote closing speech of the Malaysian Timber Conference 2019



# The Future is Now

## - Malaysian Timber Conference 2019

**T**imber and timber products, like furniture, play a vital role in the global circular economy – while new and improved uses of timber, ensures the sustainability and robustness of the industry.

Currently, innovation coupled with visually pleasing designs, technological advancements and branding, are key elements that industry players must embrace along with the need for certified and legal timber to ensure economic viability in the long-term, as issues revolving around climate change take centre stage.

These were some of the pertinent topics discussed at the Malaysian Timber Conference 2019. Themed “The Future is Now”, the conference was held at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur in July this year.

As a signature event of conference organiser, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), it was officiated by the Ministry of Primary Industries YB Mdm. Teresa Kok. Also present were Deputy Minister of Primary Industries Datuk Seri Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, who also delivered the keynote closing address, as well as Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Primary Industries Mr. Ravi Muthayah. MTC Chairman Dato’ Low Kian Chuan and MTC’s Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer Mr. Richard Yu, were also present at the event.

For decades, the timber industry has been a revenue generator for the country. In 2018, the timber industry contributed 1.6 percent to the Gross Domestic Product, or 2.2 percent of the country’s total export with earnings of RM22.3 billion.

Wooden furniture is among the top contributors. In 2018, furniture contributed about 35 percent of the total export earnings, followed by plywood at 21 percent.

“I hope Malaysian timber-based manufacturers can continue to offer distinctive product differentiation and experience to meet customers’ diverse expectations and needs,” YB Mdm. Kok said.

“Industry players must understand the importance of investing in technologies to enhance productivity and to remain competitive in the global marketplace,” she continued.

On the conservation front, YB Mdm. Kok was happy to note that MTC has allocated RM1.5 million for the study of pygmy elephants and orangutan rehabilitation in Sabah. She also said Malaysia will honour its commitment of maintaining at least 50 percent of its land area under forest cover.

Dato’ Low said timber-based manufacturers should also aggressively move towards producing better, value-added, downstream products using high value timbers.

She said these incentives are part of the Council’s Five-Year Action Plan (2019-2023) repositioning strategy to help the industry move towards the next frontier. This includes the introduction of the Market Vendor Development

Programme, where more established timber-based manufacturers take SME’s under their wings to collectively grow the overall economic pie of the timber and wood-based industry.

The conference featured 10 speakers who are thought leaders from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Brazil, among others. The line-up featured a wide range of topics aimed at shaping the future of sustainability, consumption patterns, Industry 4.0 introducing disruptive thinking and practices in a traditional industry, understanding branding, marketing, and the next generation.

Speakers included CEO of Naluri Malaysia Mr. Azran Osman Rani and Executive Director Mr. Lee Heng Guie; Dr. Ivan Tomaselli, who is the president of STCP Engenharia de Projetos Ltd; award-winning design critic and New York Times Columnist Ms. Alice Rawsthorn; Mr. Nigel Hollis, the Chief Global Analyst of Kantar Millward Brown; “Design King” of Malaysia Dr. Eric Leong; and Mr. Michael O’Hara, Director of Global Furniture, UL.

Other speakers included Dr. Maung Maung, Country Director for The Centre for People and Forests in Myanmar; Mr. Peter Hartman, a consultant at Schuler Consulting; and Research Director of the Institute of Tropical Forestry and Forest Products in Malaysia, Dr. Jean-Marc Roda.

### Take-Home Furnish Now Points for Furniture Makers:

#### Point 1

Think together how to solve sustainability issues, reduce waste and create legacies without fear of ideas or resources running out, working together for good of all, with a broader mindset.

#### Point 2

Invest in worker’s welfare, or develop a track record of caring for workers fairly in a way that attracts more talents.

#### Point 3

Furniture industry players must think about how to use automation in any way to make production more efficient where possible.

#### Point 4

Invest in the upcoming generation via education, training and creating ways to reach out to them so that perception of industry will be the good 3D’s (delightful, desirable, discovery).

#### Point 5

Continue to ensure best practices in industry especially in sustainable management practices, tap into government bodies supportive of the timber industry like MTC, MTCC, and relevant bodies.

#### Point 6

Creating something of value is a long term growth mindset, an investment that goes beyond merely making some profit for today that would yield ROI in the long run.



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84300 Muar, Johor, Malaysia.

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Fax: +606 985 7700

Email: [info@jnconcept.com](mailto:info@jnconcept.com)

Website: [www.jnconcept.com](http://www.jnconcept.com)



# Fabulousfurniture

## Office Furniture

With much time spent at work – now, more than ever – offices are seeking functional workspaces to aid in productivity, as well as provide ergonomic support for employees working long hours. MIFF exhibitors are known for their innovative office solutions . . . a trend that is fully illustrated by the fine furnishings to be displayed at the upcoming MIFF 2020.



**ARTMATRIX TECHNOLOGY SDN BHD**

[www.artmatrix.com.my](http://www.artmatrix.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 2A 2A01



**ANJI HUAHENG HOME SUPPLIES CO.,LTD**

[www.ajhuaheng.en.alibaba.com](http://www.ajhuaheng.en.alibaba.com)  
PWTC Hall 1 140A



**ANJI SOUTH FURNITURE CO.,LTD**

[www.anjisouth.com](http://www.anjisouth.com)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B33



**ARTWRIGHT GROUP**

[www.artwright.com](http://www.artwright.com)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B05



**BOSTON OFFICE FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.boston.com.my](http://www.boston.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B50



**CHIA CHI YA ENTERPRISE CO., LTD.**

[www.jgr.com.tw](http://www.jgr.com.tw)  
PWTC Hall 4B



**CHUENG SHINE CO., LTD.**

[www.cschair.com.tw](http://www.cschair.com.tw)  
PWTC Hall 4B



**COMFYSEAT INDUSTRIES (M) SDN BHD**

[www.comfyseat.net](http://www.comfyseat.net)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B07



**GY STEEL FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.gy.com.my](http://www.gy.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B06

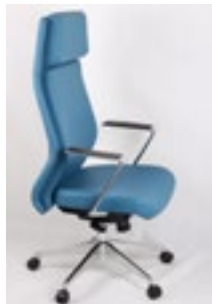


## Modern Office Solutions

Widely regarded for their innovative designs, Oasis Furniture Industries has once again created an office configuration guaranteed to impress. This conference table exudes modern flair, while the accompanying chairs provide ergonomic support. Embracing functionality, the latest office design from Oasis is sure to take any office to the next level of productivity.

**OASIS FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

[www.oasis.com.my](http://www.oasis.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B23


**KINSHA WORKS SDN BHD**

www.kinsha.com.my  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B21


**LINAK ACTUATORS SDN BHD**

www.linak.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B13


**RECO-ARIES FURNITURE SDN BHD**

www.recoofficeconcept.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B29


**STELLAR LIMITED**

www.stellarglobal.com  
PWTC Hall 2A 2A09


**SUN SAFES MFG CO**

www.eaglesafes.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B16


**SUNDESK VENTURE SDN BHD**

www.sundeskventure.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B19


**TCT NANOTEC CO., LTD.**

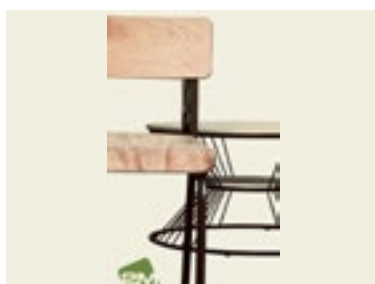
www.chair.com.tw  
PWTC Hall 4B


**VS OFFICE FURNITURE (M) SDN BHD**

www.vsofficefurniture.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B25

## Furniture for the *Global Market*

With and eye on the world, many MIFF exhibitors find success outside of their home countries. These exhibitors, in particular, create designs geared toward buyers worldwide...and find success in those other markets. MIFF, of course, is uniquely positioned to aid those exhibitors, facilitating connections and helping to establish relationships without borders.


**2M FURNITURE MANUFACTURING SDN BHD**

www.2mfurniture.com  
PWTC Hall 1 123


**ART FURNITURE INDUSTRIES (M) SDN BHD**

www.artfim.com.my  
PWTC Hall 4A 4A20



### *Enchanted by Acacia*

With a rustic vibe, this gorgeous hardwood dining set from Acacia Home Furnishing combines high quality craftsmanship and materials guaranteed to add appeal to any home. As the company's name implies, this Malaysian-based company creates their products from Acacia timber, a hardwood species which can be used to produce indoor and outdoor furniture. From there, the final products are wire-brushed and sandblasted to an antique appearance...resulting in a look that is straight from nature.

**ACACIA HOME FURNISHING SDN BHD**

www.acaciahome.com.my  
PWTC Hall 3 309



**AUTHENTEAK HOLDINGS SDN BHD**

[www.authenteak.my](http://www.authenteak.my)  
PWTC Hall 1 107

**BSL FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.bslfurniture.com](http://www.bslfurniture.com)  
MITEC Hall 2 M201

**C.K.BAN SOON LEE IND. SDN BHD**

[www.ckbsl.com.my](http://www.ckbsl.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 4A 4A08

**CHEERMAN INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

[www.cheerman.com.my](http://www.cheerman.com.my)  
MITEC Hall 8 M810

**CHINFON FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

[www.chinfonfurniture.com](http://www.chinfonfurniture.com)  
MITEC Hall 9 M903

**CHUAN YIE FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

[www.rodas.com.my](http://www.rodas.com.my)  
MITEC Hall 4 M406

**CT HENG FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.ctheng.com](http://www.ctheng.com)  
MITEC Hall 4 M412

**DISTINCTIVE FINE FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.dff.com.my](http://www.dff.com.my)  
MITEC Hall 7 M701

**DOMICA FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

[www.domica.com](http://www.domica.com)  
PWTC Hall 4A 4A11

**DREAMREX SDN BHD**

[www.dreamnite.com.my](http://www.dreamnite.com.my)  
MITEC Hall 10 M1023A

**ELK-DESA FURNITURE SDN BHD**

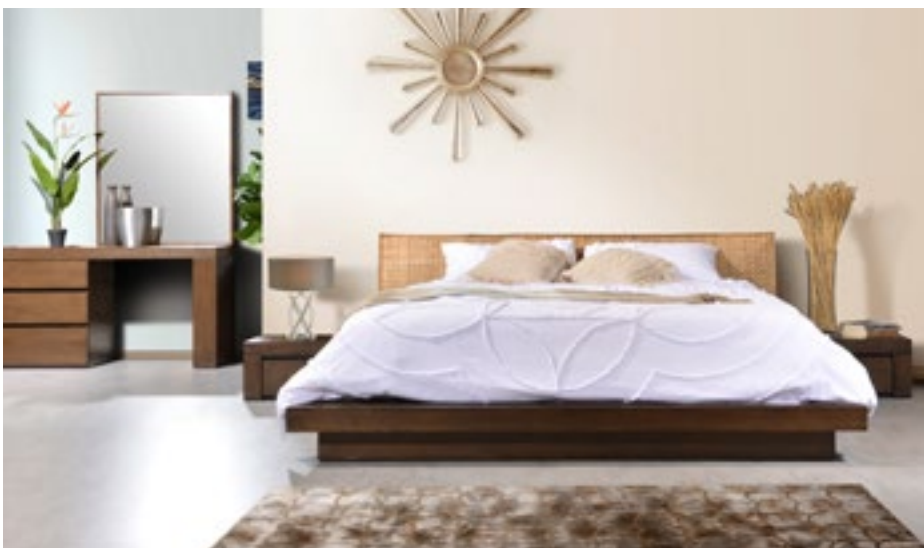
[www.elkdesafurniture.com.my](http://www.elkdesafurniture.com.my)  
MITEC Hall 6 M615

**EUROSPAN FURNITURE SDN BHD**

[www.eurospan.com.my](http://www.eurospan.com.my)  
PWTC Hall 3 315



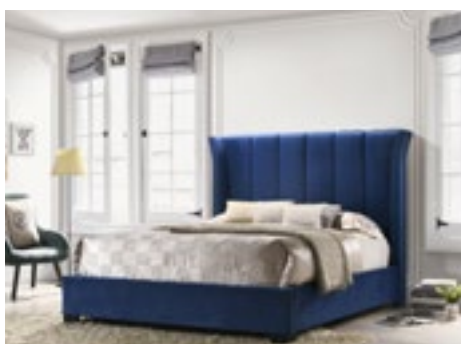
**FURNCREST SDN BHD**  
www.furncrest.com  
PWTC Hall 2B 2B01



## *Sweet dreams await with Inception*

Like the famous movie that shares the same name, designs from Inception are surely a 'dream within a dream'. Created from the finest materials, this wooden bedroom set is aesthetically appealing and draws the eye to its centerpiece – the low-lying bed, while the accompanying nightstands and dresser complete the masterpiece.

**INCEPTION DESIGN AND TRADING SDN BHD**  
www.idt.my  
MITEC Hall 8 M802



**FURNSTARS CONCEPT SDN BHD**  
www.furnstarsconcept.com  
MITEC Hall 7 M709



**FUTURE MANUFACTURER SDN BHD**  
www.futuresofa.com  
MITEC Hall 10 M1022



**GLORY FOREVER SDN BHD**  
www.glory4ever.com  
PWTC Hall 2 215



**GLORYBIZ SDN BHD**  
www.myglorybiz.com  
PWTC Hall 2 239



**GUB FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**  
www.gubfurniture.com  
MITEC Hall 7 M718A



**HUP BEH FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
PWTC Hall 1 131

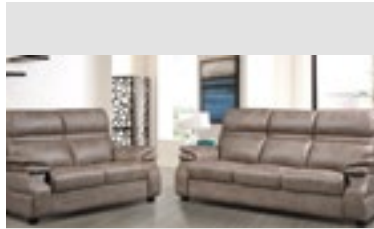


**HUPSHENG FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**  
www.dhepfurniture.com.my  
MITEC Hall 7 M708





**INSPIWOOD FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.inspiwood.com  
PWTC Hall 4A 4A30



**KENITTI SOFA SDN BHD**  
www.kenittisofa.com  
MITEC Hall 9 M901



**LASER COMPO TRADING SDN BHD**  
www.laser-compo.com  
PWTC Hall 1 117



**LATITUDE TREE FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.latitude-tree.com  
MITEC Hall 8 M803



**LB FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.lbfurniture.com  
MITEC Hall 6 M601



**LEATHERWORLD UPHOLSTERY SDN BHD**  
www.leatherworlduph.com  
MITEC Hall 7 M713



**LF FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**  
www.lffurniture.com  
MITEC Hall 3 M305



**LOFT FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.loftfurn.com  
MITEC Hall 2 M226A



**MEDWIN INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE**  
www.medwinfurniture.com  
MITEC Hall 3 M304



**MWF SOURCE SDN BHD**  
www.mw-furniture.com  
PWTC Hall 1 126



**MYRTA SDN BHD**  
PWTC Hall 2 212A



**NICOLO DESIGNS SDN BHD**  
PWTC Hall 1 127



**OMEGA SOFA (M) SDN BHD**  
www.omegasofa.com  
MITEC Hall 9 M902



**PACKMA MARKETING SDN BHD**  
PWTC Hall 1 119



**PURE STAR SYNERGY SDN BHD**  
www.purestarssb.com.my  
PWTC Hall 3 337



**SEOW BUCK SEN FURNITURE (M) SDN BHD**  
www.seowexport.com.my  
PWTC Hall 2 226



## Winning with Eco-friendly Furnishings

Clean, crisp and stylish, this minimalist bedroom set from Johann and Joann brings simple elegance, with this understated concept. Created with laminated veneer lumber (from Poplar wood), this eco-friendly material is growing fast, and offers both durability and quality assurance. With an emphasis on design, furnishings from Johann & Joann are high quality, providing great value for money.

**JOHANN & JOANN CONCEPT SDN BHD**  
www.jnjconcept.com  
MITEC Hall 6 M605

## Sleep like a King with Luxury Sleep mattresses

Fresh from its MIFF 2019 debut, Luxury Sleep is back for MIFF 2020! Established in 2011, the company is a duly recognised – and certified – mattress expert in Malaysia, with more than 40 years of industry experience through its parent company. This

experience, coupled with a worldwide presence, has helped shaped Luxury Sleep into one of the world's largest mattress manufacturers and distributors, with market expertise tailored to each customer's and region's requirements.

The company's high standards are exemplified by its three core tenets: dedication, precision and trustworthiness – values that are infused into its products and customer service. Operating as an ODM and OEM, Luxury Sleep boasts more than 20 brands (both in-house and international) in its catalog, specialising in mattresses, pillows, bolsters, divans . . . and other fine bedding items.

As people spend about half of their lifetimes in bed (around 33 years!), selecting a supportive mattress is vital for a restful sleep – and for productivity in the waking hours. Luxury Sleep knows how important quality is, both in terms of sleep and bedding, and therefore, its factory produces the mattress's main components, including PU foam and springs. This helps to not only control pricing, but also ensures all of the products meet the company's high standards.

### LUXURY SLEEP PRODUCTS SDN BHD

[www.luxurysleep.com](http://www.luxurysleep.com)

MITEC Hall 10 M1015



#### SERN KOU FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.sernkou.com](http://www.sernkou.com)

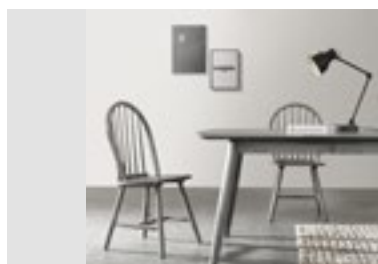
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#### SHIN AIK MARKETING (M) SDN BHD

[www.shinaik.com.my](http://www.shinaik.com.my)

PWTC Hall 1 105



#### SIMEWOOD PRODUCT SDN BHD

[www.simewood.com](http://www.simewood.com)

MITEC Hall 4 M420A



#### SIN JIM PLASTIC INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.sjplus.com.my](http://www.sjplus.com.my)

MITEC Hall 2 M209



#### SINCERITY INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

PWTC Hall 1 128A



#### SINHUIWAN FURNITURE SDN BHD

[www.sinhuiwanfurniture.com](http://www.sinhuiwanfurniture.com)

PWTC Hall 1 101





## 'Masters' of Design

With a name like Master Grade – and coupled with inspired design – this company strives to create furnishings for the modern lifestyle. This bedroom set clearly illustrates that fact, providing hidden storage drawers underneath the elegantly designed bed. Complete with rolling shelves, this bed serves to provide a 'masterful' solution for those short on space, but long on comfort.

### MASTER GRADE FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.mastergrade furniture.com](http://www.mastergrade furniture.com)

MITEC Hall 8 M805



### SYNERGY WOOD PRODUCTS SDN BHD

[www.synergywood.com.my](http://www.synergywood.com.my)

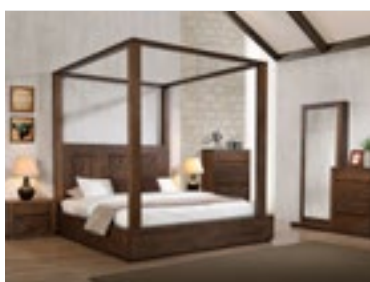
MITEC Hall 6 M612



### SYNWAY FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.synwayfurniture.com](http://www.synwayfurniture.com)

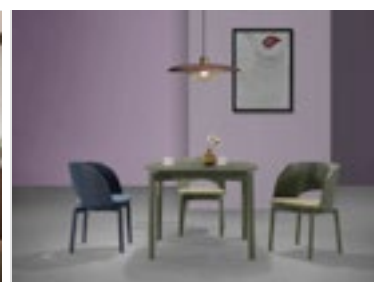
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### TITOV SDN BHD

[www.titov.com.my](http://www.titov.com.my)

PWTC Hall 3 313



### TMH FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.tmh furniture.com](http://www.tmh furniture.com)

MITEC Hall 2 M220



### UHN SOFA SDN BHD (LORENZO)

[www.lorenzo-international.com](http://www.lorenzo-international.com)

MITEC Hall 10 M1025



### WA CUSHION SDN BHD

[www.wagroup.com.my](http://www.wagroup.com.my)

MITEC Hall 4 M416



### YNS FURNITURE MANUFACTURING SDN BHD

PWTC Hall 1 119



### YOUNG SING INDUSTRY SDN BHD

[www.youngsing.my](http://www.youngsing.my)

MITEC Hall 4 M409B



## Trimmed in Gold

From Yang Guang Furniture International, this dining set epitomises wealth and luxury. The colour combination, with brilliant white contrasting with a gold-coloured trim, creates a rich environment for dining and entertaining. Constructed from MDF, solid wood, glass, metal and stainless steel, this modern dining set is designed to complement today's interiors and is backed by the company's good design, fair price, prompt delivery and flexibility. Yang Guang manufactures and exports glossy and veneer furniture and is currently targeting markets in North and South Africa and the Middle East.

### YANG GUANG FURNITURE INTERNATIONAL SDN BHD

[www.yangguangfurniture.com](http://www.yangguangfurniture.com)

PWTC Hall 1 110

# Furniture for the *U.S Market*

As the US-China trade war continues, it's providing additional opportunities for companies in other countries to fill the void – and MIFF exhibitors are always ready to step up to the plate. These companies are specifically looking for buyers in the US, and with their high-quality furnishings, they are certain to attract wanted attention.



**ACME FINE FURNISHINGS SDN BHD**  
www.acmecorp.com  
MITEC Hall 10 M1019



**AIK CHEE FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.aikchee.com.my  
PWTC Hall 3 333



**ANG BEE BUSINESS SDN BHD**  
www.angbee.com  
PWTC Hall 2 215



**B.E. FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
MITEC Hall 3 M311



**BAND WOOD SDN BHD**  
www.bandwood.my  
PWTC Hall 1 109



**BE WOOD CRAFT SDN BHD**  
www.begroup.com.my  
MITEC Hall 2 M216



**BIOTREND RESOURCES SDN BHD**  
PWTC Hall 3 332



**BLH GLOBAL MARKETING**  
www.blhglobal.my  
MITEC Hall 6 M603



**BOWLMAN FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.bowlmanfurn.com  
PWTC Hall 2 207



**CHUANHENG FURNITURE PRODUCTS SDN BHD**  
www.chuanheng.net  
MITEC Hall 7 M712



**CIVIC TAI MANUFACTURING SDN BHD**  
www.civictaifurniture.com  
PWTC Hall 2 247



**COMFY NEST INTERNATIONAL SDN BHD**  
www.comforcel.com.my  
MITEC Hall 8 M808B



## *Spotlight on Slumber*

Transform a 'blah' bedroom into a sanctuary of slumber with the Utah Bed from Best-Beteck. Constructed with a combination of upholstered and solid rubberwood with basic colours and an uncomplicated design, the Utah Bed is an aesthetically captivating piece . . . and the ideal 'nest' to find rest after a busy day. Known for their high-quality upholstered furniture (including bedding, dining and sofa sets), Best-Beteck manufactures and exports to a worldwide market, which are mainly used for household purposes.

**BEST-BETECK FURNITURE SDN BHD**  
www.bestbeteck.com  
PWTC Hall 2 218A





## No Renovations Needed

Does your kitchen need a new look? The Kitchen Cabinet (DIY) from Furnizone provides a modular alternative to expensive renovations (and with just a fraction of the installation effort) . . . perfect for today's modern home. Constructed from chipboard and MDF particle board and lamination, this one-of-a-kind, six-piece kitchen cabinet can be arranged in different configurations and endless combinations to achieve the desired look – perfect for storing food, cooking equipment, dishes, silverware . . . and more. Since 2009, Furnizone has manufactured high-quality knock-down furniture, with the mission of enhancing living environments at the best prices.

### FURNIZONE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

[www.furnizone.com](http://www.furnizone.com)

PWTC Hall 2 231



### COSMINES SDN BHD

[www.cosmines.com](http://www.cosmines.com)

PWTC Hall 2 216



### CS ELEGANCE SDN BHD

[www.cselegance.com](http://www.cselegance.com)

PWTC Hall 1 132



### DECORTAGE SDN BHD

[www.decortage.com](http://www.decortage.com)

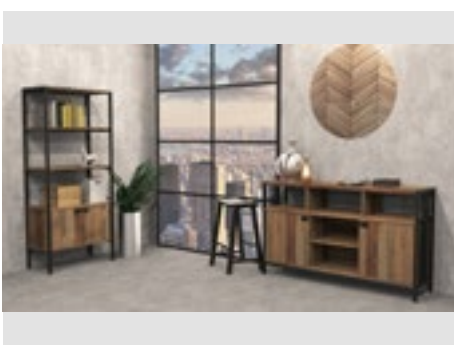
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### DEESSE FURNITURE SDN BHD

[www.deesse.com.my](http://www.deesse.com.my)

MITEC Hall 4 M407



### DELANO FURNITURE INDUSTRIES (M) SDN BHD

[www.delanofurnitures.com.my](http://www.delanofurnitures.com.my)

PWTC Hall 3 302



### FAVOURITE DESIGN SDN BHD

[www.favouritedesign.com.my](http://www.favouritedesign.com.my)

MITEC Hall 8 M815



### FERNEX SDN. BHD

[www.visco-pro.com.my](http://www.visco-pro.com.my)

MITEC Hall 6 M609



### GLORY FURNITURE SDN BHD

[www.gloryforever.net](http://www.gloryforever.net)

MITEC Hall 3 M316A



### GOLDEN HOME ELEGANCE SDN BHD

[www.homeelegance.com](http://www.homeelegance.com)

MITEC Hall 8 M811

# LuxurySleep







SLEEPING SOLUTIONS

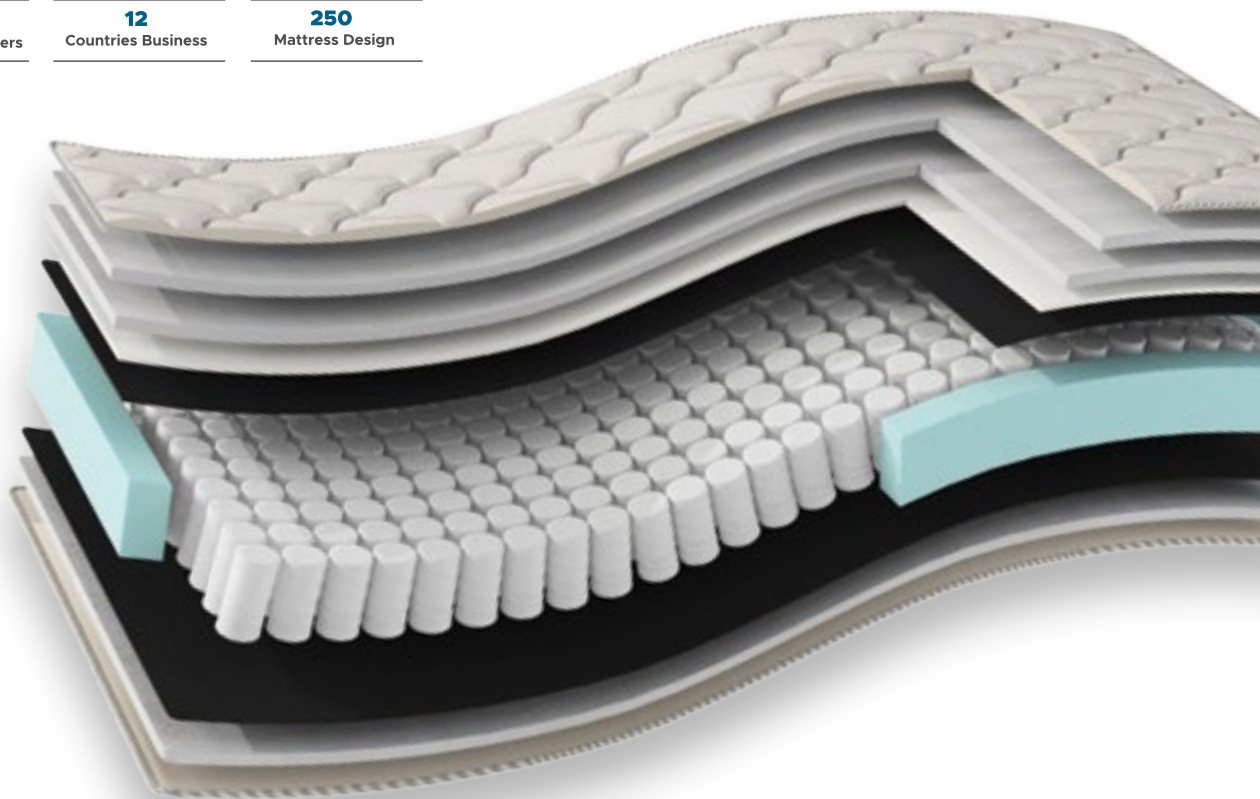
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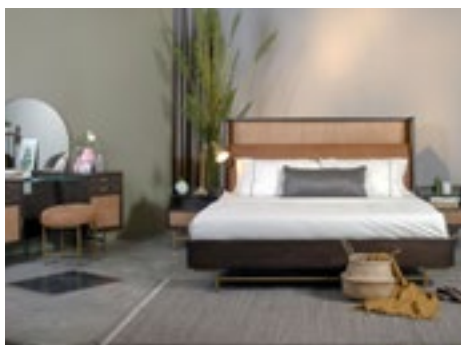
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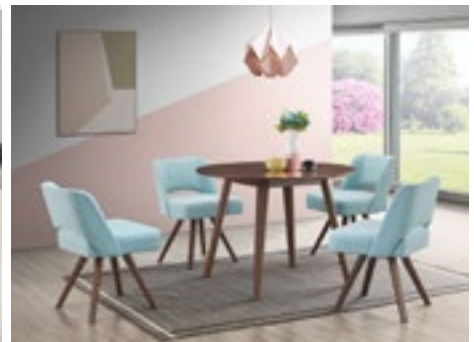
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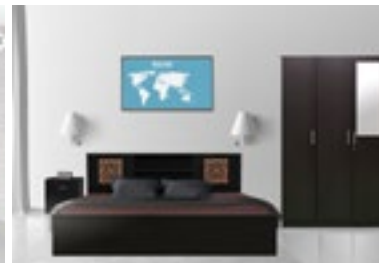
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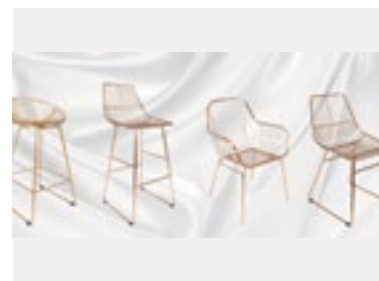
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# Furniture Industry 4.0

by Chow Ee-Tan, *Furnish Now* writer

**T**he era of Industry 4.0 (IR4.0) is here and continues to gain traction. However, this revolution's effect will vary widely from industry to industry, based on products and customer expectations.

The Malaysian furniture industry – a major contributor to the nation's gross domestic product – offers employment to more than 93,000 workers of varying skill levels and has been identified by the new Government to adopt the IR4.0 . . . but compared to other industries in the manufacturing sector, it's experiencing a slow start.

Professor Dr. Jegatheswaran Ratnasingam from the Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia, says the Malaysian furniture industry is not ready to embrace IR4.0.

"Many manufacturers are still highly dependent on the workers, including foreign workers, and they have neglected to look into making the work simpler through automation. They do not see the need for it because of the input of raw materials and workers," shared Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran.

He said another challenge is that the industry is dominated by small- and medium-sized, family owned companies, and many of those are not very receptive to outside ideas, including technology.

Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran, who is also a veteran furniture researcher, said the Universiti studied to what extent the industry is open to automation, along with the quantum of investment and other challenges.

He says most of the factories are using automation from Industry 2.0 and 3.0, which is still very basic and without digital technology, and needs to be operated and processed by

manual workers.

"The larger companies are more receptive to automation – especially those using particle boards of MDF boards – because the products are very standardised, so they can be automated," he said. "Automation is usually used only towards the end part of production operation...the preparation part of the components is still somewhat labour intensive."

According to Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran, currently only about 12-15% of companies are gearing towards Industry 4.0 – a level where information technology is used to the fullest, including cloud technology, AI and robotics.

Perhaps a main factor for the slow adaptation of automation is that about 80% of Malaysian furniture manufacturers produce wooden furniture, which is not easy to manufacture using full automation.

"In order to adopt automation and digitised technology, you also need to have workers who are knowledgeable in this area. Not many of them are found in the old industry," he explained.

Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran believes in the advantages of IR4.0. If factories are fully automated, their industrial productivity can be increased by at least four times, and the quality of furniture becomes more consistent. This leads to the turnaround being more competitive as well.

"With that, you are able to improve the livelihood in the industry in the first place. Workers are more knowledgeable and command more salary. Those who are at risk in losing their jobs would need to up skill themselves in order to move up the value chain," he said.

Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran noted that the single largest deterrent for

companies to adopt IR4.0 is the cost of investment in full automation and digital technology.

Varying degrees of automation can be found in the four stages of manufacturing. For the first stage of preparing raw materials, there's already a scanning technology that allows one to choose raw materials and to eliminate faulty parts.

He says some companies have invested in a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine that transfers design into computer; then the machine cuts the materials according to the shapes.

"It is a complete workstation," said Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran. "But instead of using it to produce different designs, many companies are using this machine to produce furniture in very high volume."

While robotics are employed in the finishing section of the production process, human effort is still required if the profiles are complicated. And when it comes to packaging and shipping, the software is available.

"However, the level of ICT application in the furniture industry is still relatively basic. Technology is not being used efficiently," said Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran, adding that the whole concept of big data does not exist in the furniture industry.

This has to do with the awareness of product design, which he said is still low and has to be improved.

"A piece of furniture can employ not just one, but different types of materials. We should come out with unique designs for our furniture production. Once when we do that, IR4.0 will become important and relevant," he highlighted.

Further, Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran said that the industry can still survive as it is, but when the basic salary of



**Professor Dr. Jegatheswaran Ratnasingam**

labour rises to above RM1,890 (now it is at around RM1,350), then the solution should be automation. While other industries such as the automotive industry, rubber, plastic and metal works are all well ahead and adopting IR4.0.

“The pace of technology advancement is ever hastening, it is only a matter of time before companies will have to adopt IR4.0 technologies,” said Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran.

He reckons it will take Malaysia between 10 to 15 years to fully reach IR4.0.

“Then, if we don’t embrace the concept of IR4.0, we will eventually be left behind or stagnate, losing our competitiveness as a furniture manufacturing nation in the world market,” he concluded.



## Ecomate Sdn Bhd

Ecomate, a particle board furniture manufacturer that exports household furniture, is gradually changing its production line by adopting some automation machines.

“I personally think that using these automation machines will increase the quality of the products, as well as productivity,” said Jason Koh, director of Ecomate. “My employees only need to adjust the required size in the program and everything can be done by machines.”

According to Mr. Koh, the panel-based furniture is mainly standardised in shape and form, making it a prime candidate to have fully automated factories. The processing steps are consistent, thus it only needs a small amount of labour compared to the other industries.

“The company’s production department is gradually being introduced to automation,” said Mr. Koh. Automation machines are being used in the first segment, middle segment and also the last segment of the production line.

“This allocation is to ensure the errors are being minimised in every important production step,” he said. “If IR4.0 technology is applied in furniture manufacturers, the activity and quality of the products can be maximised and it will numerously reduce dependency on foreign workers.”

He also disclosed that Ecomate is planning to implant automotive software.

“I have learned that this software is capable in stock-taking when the materials are delivered, and it will auto-generate the PO when the stock level is below the minimum allowed quantity. This can reduce the issue of having excess stock and prevent not having enough stock in the warehouse.

“In the future, Ecomate will keep investing in fully automated machines. Sending an employee overseas to learn the new machines is also planned. I believe that through this continuous learning, we will soon reach this national mission,” said Mr. Koh.

“Certified engineers shall be trained to operate the new technology, so that the layout and production line positioning, and the entire arrangement of the machine and working line, are linked and work together seamlessly,” he continued.

Mr. Koh explained that the main reason that most Malaysian furniture manufacturers are still not close to adopting IR4.0 is that the knowledge and understanding of this aspect is still very limited. Also, automated machines are not popular in the Malaysian industry.

Mr. Koh concurs with Prof. Dr. Jegatheswaran that Malaysian furniture companies are not ready to practice IR4.0 due to financial pressures, technical operation issues, employee training and other factors.

“I hope that the Government can give more support, subsidies and sponsorships which will motivate us move towards IR4.0,” he said



Mr. Jason Koh,  
Director of Ecomate





**Mr. Yong Yoke Keong**  
Managing Director and  
CEO of Artwright Group

## Artwright Group

Mr. Yong Yoke Keong, managing director and chief executive of Artwright Group, together with his company is a believer of IR4.0, and has made the basic preparations by investing in an enterprise integrated leading software SAP R3, which is the first step towards IR4.0.

“We also have a fully integrated R&D software PTC CREO, that performs design for manufacturing process. Our design labs can communicate with multiple

factories directly to their machines, avoiding production mistakes,” he said, adding that the IT infrastructure enables Artwright to add on additional latest digital structures without fissures.

Founded in 1965, Artwright produces and exports premium office interiors with good ecological balance and ergonomic designs.

“We also invest in talent to develop new high-quality, high-design products. We recently invested into multiple new servers to ready our hybrid cloud structure to propagate our information and integrate any customer responses and sales demands,” shared Mr. Yong.

The world, he said, is recognising the new industry revolution and is taking it on – and 5G communication infrastructures and block chain technologies will further enhance and hasten the IR4.0.

“However, furniture is complex in terms of the very many choices to make a purchasing decision. It is a 3D artform with colours, textures, styles, functions, trends and ergonomics, all together.

“IR4.0 is going to revolutionise furniture making to the extent of what I call ‘Furniture on Demand’. It means you can design and chose your furniture and have them 3D-printed or to have them auto-produced by specialised machines to accept orders instantly,” he said.

Mr. Yong admitted that the furniture industry is still in its infancy for IR4.0. However, the complexities in distribution, production and product parameters allow all opportunities as IR4.0 unfolds.

Presently, according to Mr. Yong, there is not one company in the world that has integrated the entire IR4.0 from end-to-end. Companies like Amazon, Microsoft, SAP, Oracle and Alphabet are trying everything. Hence, there are lots of opportunities for the niche players.

“I hope to thrust Artwright into the arena, in any small way. Artwright is trying to get IR4.0 going, and perhaps to be pioneer in some niches of IR4.0 in relation to furniture design and furniture demand fulfillment.


“If Malaysia can be the most attractive country in the world in terms of talent, our furniture industry will flourish. Artwright is ready for any opportunity that Malaysia may behold,” noted Mr. Yong.

He believes that Malaysia is not too late in catching on to IR4.0.

“Furniture industry IR4.0 is not mapped out yet here. Malaysia has strong manufacturing and supply clusters, and can be ahead because many things will change when IR4.0 unfolds. We need to believe that this will revolutionise the Malaysian furniture industry,” Mr. Yong concluded.







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# Muar Furniture Park: Malaysia's Furniture Hub of the Future

by Shantini Harriet, *Furnish Now* writer

As a leading manufacturer and exporter of furniture to more than 160 countries worldwide, the Malaysian furniture industry has been experiencing a significant growth spurt, with an increase of 9.16% within the first five months of this year – this is in line with the National Timber Industry Policy's (NATIP) vision for annual exports of furniture to reach RM12 billion by 2020.

On top of this, the furniture industry gained recognition by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) as one of the main industries capable of driving the transformation of the manufacturing industry, indicative of its growing importance for Malaysia's overall trade performance.

As such, the Malaysian government is making an effort to ramp up local manufacturing capabilities, while attracting foreign investors to boost Malaysian furniture exports, and promoting the country as hub in the region. As such, the Johor State Government's endeavor to do just that with the development of the Muar Furniture Park (MFP), has been welcomed and praised.

Last year, Japan remained Malaysia's top export market for timber and timber products with RM3.9 billion, followed by the USA with RM3.7 billion, and the European Union with RM2.2 billion. There are 1,708 furniture manufacturers nationwide in Malaysia, producing furniture for both

local and international markets. Of this number, 700 of these manufacturers can be found in the State of Johor.

Muar, a historical town in Johor, is home to the furniture industry that contributes close to 60% of the country's furniture exports, worth about RM10 billion annually. It is a fitting choice for a visionary RM1.3 billion hub, primarily to empower furniture manufacturing in Johor and enhance the export value of local furniture products throughout international markets.

## Transforming acreage

The Muar Furniture Park (MFP), an integrated furniture hub by Johor Corporation (JCorp) entrusted by the Johor State Government in 2015, is a 986-acre development which covers industrial lots, commercial hubs, a cargo consolidation centre and centralised workers quarters. Dato' Kamaruzzaman Abu Kassim, President & Chief Executive of JCorp said: "The project will potentially attract over RM1 billion investments into the district, driven by the transformative effect of a robust, modern, automated, well-supported R&D industry, with a targeted 10,000 new jobs in the pipeline."

The MFP, which includes 530 acres for industrial and 113 acres for commercial areas, was officially launched in 2018 with the first phase of 90 acres (platform for 32 lots)



"The project will potentially attract over RM1 billion investments into the district, driven by the transformative effect of a robust, modern, automated, well-supported R&D industry, with a targeted 10,000 new jobs in the pipeline."

**-Dato' Kamaruzzaman Abu Kassim,  
President & Chief Executive, JCorp**



completed three months ahead of schedule in September 2019. Dato' Kamaruzzaman explained that JCorp "aims to fully develop an integrated hub for the Muar furniture industry by 2021 and ensure companies start construction of their facilities soon, with the culmination of the MFP development to be fully operational by 2024, with about 213 companies, thus fulfilling the Government's aspirations".

### Paving the way to sustainability

Response towards the project by local manufacturers is running high with 70% of industrial acreage already sold. Along with strategic partners Muar Furniture Association (MFA) and Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB), JCorp has been able to woo 126 manufacturers, especially among MFA members. Most investors were impressed with the integrated and systematic concept of MFP, which is the only industrial hub dedicated to furniture manufacturing.

The MFA, with 600 registered members, has been actively encouraging factories operating on non-industrial sites to move to industrial-grade sites.

"In Muar, there is a heavy case of factories being built on agricultural land. One of the purposes of this industrial park is to relocate these manufacturers to a proper industrial place and develop the





state's furniture and wood-based sector. It encourages manufacturers to move from agricultural land to industrial lands, and gradually completes the legalisation plan of illegal furniture factories in 2020," explained Mr. Christopher Yau, acting president of MFA.

### Some features of the MFP that makes it stand-out among investors include:

- its large acreage that will make it the largest, first-of-its-kind furniture hub in Southeast Asia;
- all the facilities needed by the industry would be located in one place;
- it's a gated industrial park with ancillary security facilities, hostel, container management and transportation systems, sanitation facilities, dormitories, medical care centres, exhibition halls, waste disposal systems, etc.;
- the centralised model ensures cost savings, green production protection and ecology, therefore reducing the use of the largest raw materials for logistics expenses, increasing productivity, and facilitating the promotion of Malaysian furniture brands;
- it's a sustainable ecosystem through timber sourced from forest management;
- efforts by the MFA, which works with the government to facilitate special incentives such as the MDG grant, brand awards, retention of rubberwood for furniture downstream manufacturers, and tax deductions;
- one of the local logistic companies has also confirmed at the final stage to seal the purchase of an industrial site to provide one-stop customs clearance services for industrial parks and manufacturers near Muar;
- assisting small- and medium-sized furniture makers to further grow their business through development and sale of 10,000-square-feet of ready-made-factories to those who can't afford their own site development;
- assistance by the government to facilitate industry players in obtaining bank loans.

### Go forth and prosper

Expected to be managed under the purview of JCorp's subsidiary company, TPM Technopark Sdn Bhd, the MFP is dedicated to aiding excellence among furniture manufacturers, and will support industries such as commercial, retail, accommodation, R&D sites, and other service providers.

Though there have been some concerns about manpower shortages, the MFP's conceptualisation for high technology and automation will effectively ease this problem when manufacturers transit into improved automation – that will in fact, reduce the need for manpower. To that end, JCorp is actively seeking Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) in furniture to invest in MFP to further spur the growth of the furniture industry.

Furthermore, the MFA has also been doing its part to find a solution to the problem. "MFA is working with technical colleges, universities and institutions to provide human resources in the fields of design, marketing, technology and promotion, to solve the problem of manpower shortages. In addition, Muar's furniture industry has shown support towards the Government's efforts in improving automation in order to reduce manpower," said Mr. Yau.

JCorp aspires to create more job opportunities for locals with Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with higher-end automation and R&D initiatives.

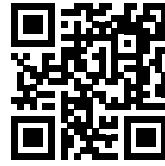
Malaysian furniture is highly regarded for its quality and competitive prices. The development of the park would ensure the industry's continued growth and sustainability for local factories in Muar and Johor. As a catalyst for large scale development of supply chains within the circle of furniture industry (upstream/downstream), the MFP will create job opportunities with sufficient numbers of employment for locals, while spurring socio-economic development of an urban township and a growth corridor within the vicinity of MFP and its surrounding areas.

Johor's ambitious design to play host to a centralised furniture hub, may not only spur the development of the country's furniture industry, but also inadvertently become a role model for other states in furniture production.

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