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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) 2018 expects its annual four-day exhibition to generate sales growth of 5% compared to the record high of US\$940mil (RM3.7bil) it achieved last year.

MIFF founder and chairman Datuk Dr Tan Chin Huat said response from exhibitors had been good.

"Response is better, as registrations were also 10% more than last year," he told StarBiz after the launch of the annual exhibition yesterday.

"We're looking at a 5% increase at least," he said, adding that the recent appreciation of

the ringgit will also help bolster sales.

According to Tan, the exhibition, which will run until Sunday, has seen a 13% increase to 622 exhibitors this year - its biggest event in 24 years.

MIFF 2018 also marks the biggest international furniture meeting place in South-East Asia, having grown 25% to 100,000 sq meters in space this year and occupying 18 halls at two exhibition centres - the Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre and Putra World Trade Centre.

In his speech, Tan said the additional exhibition space would provide innovative ways for exhibitors to showcase their products and

engage buyers in greater comfort.

International exhibitors include those from China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, South Korea, India, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Turkey, Singapore and the United States.

Star Media Group Bhd is the media partner for MIFF 2018.

Last year's MIFF event set a sales record of US\$940mil (RM3.7bil).

It featured 550 companies and drew nearly 220,000 visitors. Global buyers from 132 countries rose 5% to 5,603.

Meanwhile, Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, who officiated the event, said in his

speech that the furniture industry has been a key driver for the Malaysian economy.

"In 2017, the value of Malaysia's exports of furniture products was RM10.14bil, an increase of 6.4% compared with 2016," he said.

Among the major furniture products that contributed to Malaysia's exports earnings was wooden furniture. "In 2017, the exports of wooden furniture was RM8.1bil or 80% of the total furniture export earnings. With this performance, I am certain that the timber industry at large and specifically the furniture industry will continue to contribute to our economic wellbeing," he said.

MIFF 2018 eyes sales growth of 5%