

'Local furniture set to hit export target'

Mah: Outlook looks good and demand is increasing

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's furniture industry is set to achieve its RM12bil export target by 2020, says Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong.

"The outlook looks good and the demand is increasing. I think we can achieve this target with the effort of all parties," the Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister told reporters after launching the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) 2018.

Mah said last year, the total value of Malaysia's furniture exports was RM10.14bil, an increase of 6.4% as compared to 2016.

He said Malaysian furniture makers were known for their quality of work and competitive pricing.

"Moving forward, we hope there will be more branding activities so that Malaysia can have its own furniture brand. There will be more value-added products," he said.

Under the National Timber Industry Policy, it has set a target for RM12bil in furniture exports by 2020. Malaysia is one of the world's top 10 largest furniture producers.

On a related matter, Mah said the ban on rubberwood would continue to ensure there was enough supply for the furniture industry.

"Among the major furniture products that contributed to our export earnings was wooden furniture.

"Last year, exports of wooden furniture stood at RM8.1bil or 80% of the total furniture export earnings. A big proportion was made from rubberwood," he said.

The export of rubberwood has been banned since July 1 last year.

Asked if the strengthening of the ringgit against the US dollar would affect exports, Mah said the impact would not be significant as Malaysian furniture, which was of high quality,

were very much in demand.

"There could be a drop in terms of ringgit value as the products are sold in foreign currency. But overall, I do not expect a big drop as the demand is strong," he said.

Meanwhile, MIFF has pledged support to *The Star's* Step Up education programme for schools.

At the opening ceremony, MIFF founder and chairman Datuk Dr Tan Chin Huat presented a mock cheque for RM50,000 to Star Media Group chairman Datuk Fu Ah Kiow.

The programme helps students to learn English through educational pull-outs in *The Star* that are distributed every alternate week.

The 24-page pull-out aims to take an unorthodox approach in educating its readers through its vibrant and interactive classroom activities.

Star Media Group is the media partner for MIFF 2018.



Kind gesture: Dr Tan (third from left) presenting the mock cheque to Fu at the MIFF opening ceremony. With them are (from left) UBM Asia president and chief executive officer Jime Essink, UBM Asia Asean business group managing director M. Gandhi, Mah, Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities secretary-general Datuk K. Yogevaran, and Muar Furniture Association president Koh Chon Chai.