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# MTC to promote glulam timber

It aims to help local manufacturers move up the value chain

**LEE KIAN SEONG**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) plans to extensively promote the glued-laminated (glulam) timber industry in Malaysia to help local timber manufacturers move up the value chain. MTC timber industries development division director Wong Tuck Meng said glulam timber was a relatively new product in South-East Asia but widely used as a major building component in Europe, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Glulam timber involves the process of gluing pieces of timber into a larger "dimensional" piece, and can be manufactured in a variety of shapes and sizes. Properly treated, glulam timber has the advantage of being weather-resistant.

Wong told *StarBiz* that a working trip to Australia last year had ignited MTC's interest in promoting the glulam timber industry in Malaysia. "We have set up an interest group on glulam timber, which will involve stakeholders in the local timber industry."

"This will include timber manufacturers, government agencies like MTC, Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia as well as universities and other professional bodies," he said.

Wong believes that it is time to have a closer look at glulam timber as

part of efforts to diversify the local timber industry.

"MTC has obtained positive feedback on the potential of glulam timber industry in Malaysia based on discussions with architects and timber manufacturers nationwide," he said, adding that glulam timber was suitable for use in the building of structures such as stadiums, bridges, hospitals and schools.

Glulam timber products also hold tremendous export potential.

"There is no reason why Malaysia cannot make it big for glulam overseas given Australia's success in Dubai while New Zealand exports to Hong Kong," Wong noted. "For exports, we should not aim at traditional markets like Europe but focus on countries that do not have manufacturing facilities."

Wong said the initial plan would be to create demand for the domestic market but "it is still too early to project local (demand)," adding that Malaysia had ample timber resources to produce glulam timber products.

But he acknowledged that finding the right level of skills to produce glulam timber would be a challenge. To address the lack of skills, MTC will be organising training courses to the United States for designers and manufacturers beginning this month.

Wong noted that the initial invest-

ments for the manufacturing of glulam timber products could range from RM2mil to RM3mil.

He revealed that "a company from Johor has bought over a second-hand factory in Australia and is transferring the operation to Malaysia. The production, which is for the domestic market is slated for next month." The company will be the first to produce glulam timber.



»We have set up an interest group on glulam timber«

WONG TUCK MENG