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## FRIM urges furniture industry to use alternative raw materials

THE Malaysian furniture industry should explore alternative raw materials in view of the increasing shortage of timber supply and the need to inject uniqueness to furniture exports.

"Furniture is one of the major exports of our wood-based sector," the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) said in a statement yesterday.

Over the years, export value rose steadily and in 2008, about RM8 billion worth of furniture were exported.

"Amidst the economic slowdown and stiffer competition in the global market due to emerging low-cost producers, efforts are being considered to upgrade the value chain.

"One possible way is by means of differentiation through the use of different materi-

als or feedstock.

"This will also help to alleviate the material shortage problem encountered by the wood-based industries in general and the furniture sector in particular," head of FRIM's Advanced Processing & Design Programme, Dr Tan Yu Eng was quoted as saying in the statement.

FRIM, the nation's premier research institute in tropical forestry and forest products, would showcase unfamiliar raw materials or feedstock for the consideration of the industry at the five-day Malaysian International Furniture Fair beginning today.

Tan said FRIM would also highlight various technologies and services it has to offer to help the industry add value or differentiation to their products and reduce production costs. — Bernama