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KUALA LUMPUR: The timber market in Malaysia has potential to reach about RM7 billion revenue annually, according to Forest Research Institute Malaysia's forest product division officer Dr Tan Yu Eng. However, the figure is currently below that because of the focus on the export market, Tan said although he did not mention the current value of the domestic timber market.

He said this at the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) Timber Talk Series entitled "*Timber—A Reliable Structural Material?*" which was attended by about 70 participants from various organisations Wednesday.

The talk was part of promotion to offer timber as a reliable structural material in the local market which has been increasingly taken over by steel.

"We hope that through this kind of talk, architects and others are more aware of timber as a reliable structural material," said MTC deputy chief executive officer Tham Sing Khoo.

"We want to promote the use of timber as it is more environmentally friendly compared to other materials. It also helps to reduce global warming and carbon dioxide emission," he said.

MTC has been trying to promote the use of timber around Malaysia and is also working hard to promote the export of timber products, with the main markets being Japan, the United States, Western Europe, China, Australia and the Middle East.

"At the moment, we are exporting more of the timber overseas as higher demand is coming from countries like Japan, Australia and Canada which are using timber as material for their buildings," Tham said.

"In comparison, our local market prefer the use of steel and concrete as construction materials," he said.

MTC also expects more than 1,000 visitors to turn up for the inaugural *MTC Global Woodmart* which will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on Oct 19 and 20, 2010, Tham said.

More than 90 companies already sign up to participate in the trade exhibition, he said. — Bernama