

Headline	Sarawak accounts for only 3 pct of country# furniture export		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (KK)		
Date	04 Feb 2012	Color	Black/white
Section	Home	Circulation	88,150
Page No	I-a14	Readership	166,173
Language	English	ArticleSize	277 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,595
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 4,785



DATES TO REMEMBER: (From left) Hashim, Abdul Hamid and Khairul display the poster on the seminar.

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KOTA SAMARAHAN: Sarawak contributed less than three per cent of the country's furniture export involving a total revenue of around RM8 billion despite being the richest state in natural resources,

Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) deputy general manager Hashim Bojet said this was mainly due to the lack of investors' interest in the downstream timber industry.

He acknowledged that it was rather difficult to attract big firms, especially furniture manufacturing companies, to invest in the downstream timber industry.

"Here in Sarawak we don't have foreign furniture companies unlike in some states in Peninsular Malaysia. Altogether we have about 400 furniture manufacturers registered with STIDC but they are mostly operating on a small scale and cater to the local market.

"The three per cent share we have in the country's export for furniture products are mostly garden furniture," he said.

Earlier, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Head of Furniture Design Unit Abdul Hamid Saleh revealed that while the country was among the top 10 exporters of furniture products in the world, Sarawak's share of the country's export was less than three per cent although the state

was resource-rich.

In view of this, FRIM, STIDC and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) would jointly organise Seminar Pembangunan Industri Perabot Sarawak 2012 in Kuching from Feb 14 to 15.

"The seminar, to be officiated by Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas aims to promote the production of niche furniture products in Sarawak through the use of alternative resources and incorporation of ethnic identity in the furniture design for the domestic and global market," he disclosed.

Abdul Hamid said this at a media conference jointly conducted by FRIM, STIDC and Unimas at the university's campus here yesterday.

It was also attended by Unimas Institute of Design and Innovation (InDI) director and associate professor Dr Khairul Aidil Azlin Abd Rahman.

According to Abdul Hamid the seminar, expected to attract over 150 participants, would serve as a platform for networking and sharing of information among representatives from forest-related agencies, experts, researchers, designers, furniture manufacturers and other timber industry players in Sarawak.

"The main topics to be highlighted and discussed at the seminar include the trends and challenges faced by the industry,

the constraints of furniture exports, the importance of design and testing requirements, the raw material supply, as well as the financial and incentives support available.

"There will be 14 speakers including FRIM researchers and representatives from STIDC, Unimas, Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB), Forestry Department Sarawak, Sarawak Furniture Industry Association (SFIA), SME Bank, Furniture Industry Technology Centre (FITEC) Mara, and Sarawak Timber Association (STA)," he explained.

He said the seminar would expose participants to FRIM's research and development (R&D) activities, innovations, findings and technical services.

In conjunction with the launching of the seminar, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed between FRIM, STIDC and Unimas for collaboration in furniture design and development, training, technical services and the setting up of a furniture testing laboratory in the state.

"The seminar is free and open to the public. For registration or queries, contact Siti Emiza Misi at 082-473000 or ct_emiza@pustaka.gov.my, Yanti Abdul Kadir at 03-62797705 or yanti@frim.gov.my or Noor Azrieda Abd Rashid at 03-62797415 or azrieda@frim.gov.my.