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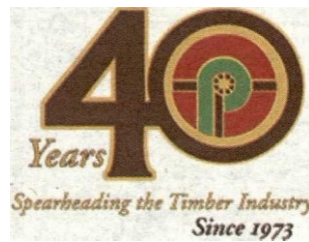
Timber and SMEs expo kicks-off

by FARAH ADILLA

THE Sarawak Grand Timber and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) expo kicked off yesterday with the four-day event aimed as a "One-Stop Centre" to provide a platform for both buyers and suppliers of timber and non-timber related products and services to conduct business networking.

The Timber Expo is organised in conjunction with Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corp (STIDC) 40th Anniversary while the SMEs Expo is held in conjunction with the state's celebration of the SMEs Week.

The inaugural Sarawak Expo for the timber industry is from June 7-10 at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCCK), while concurrently, an international conference on timber will also be held on the same date and venue.



"The expo is organised with an aim to promote trade and sales of timber and non-timber products produced by the local manufacturers," STIDC said in a statement yesterday.

The expo is organised by STIDC and the Ministry of Industrial Development Sarawak.

It said the International Conference on Timber brings together speakers from overseas as well as locals to speak on various issues that are of interest to the timber industry and the SMEs.

Among them are speakers from US, Australia and China who will present papers on

the challenges in the current timber markets and the market requirements whilst speakers from South Korea and Indonesia are expected to share information and experiences on the forest plantation and the SMEs industries respectively.

Speakers from Forest Research Institute Malaysia and Malaysia Timber Certification Council as well as the Forestry Department of Sarawak, have confirmed to speak at the conference.

"With the theme of "Challenges and Opportunities in the International Timber Trade", the International Conference on Timber 2013 serves as a forum to share and discuss on the outlook of the international timber trade," it said.

Among the issues to be highlighted are the market growth for US, China, India and Japan, challenges in international timber trade

especially in compliance to new regulations, future market potentials, sustainable supply of timber and the future of cultivated forest.

"Apart from a platform to meet with industry peers, experts and business prospects, participants of the conference will benefit in terms of knowledge-sharing by expert speakers on international timber trade outlook. This is an opportunity to discuss questions and concerns on the future outlook of timber industry and trade and to learn about timber new market and product requirements," it said.

Meanwhile, more than 200 booths will showcase varieties of timber-based products which include furniture and SMEs' local products such as food, which include among others the famous Sarawak *kek lapis*, *laksa* paste, snacks, edible bird nests, beverages, textiles, cosmetics and handicrafts.