

Headline	State focussing on forest plantations and downstream activities — Awg Tengah		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (Kuching)		
Date	13 Oct 2016	Color	Full Color
Section	Home	Circulation	89,224
Page No	1,4	Readership	267,672
Language	English	ArticleSize	739 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	Philip Kiew	AdValue	RM 10,077
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 30,231



# State focussing on forest plantations and downstream activities — Awg Tengah

By **Philip Kiew**

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**MIRI:** Sarawak is strategically boosting her natural resources base by ramping up forest plantations and downstream activities in a sustainable timber industry ecosystem while looking out for new sources of income beyond and sustaining the timber industry.

Advancing downstream timber industries by engaging players to boost quality furniture production and bamboo forest plantations were among the plans of the state government to expand its economic base further.

Second Minister of Resource Planning and Environment Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, who is also Minister of Industrial and Entrepreneur Development, Trade and Investment (Meiti), said this when declaring open the Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) Northern Regional Office at Marina Square here yesterday.

“We all know for a fact that our natural forests are now depleting; therefore, there is a need to go into planted forests and STIDC has, this year, taken over Sarawak Planted Forest Sdn Bhd from State Financial Secretary Incorporated as a strategic move through its wholly-owned subsidiary SPF to transform the timber industry,” he said.

He also said the state government had increased log quota to 70 per cent for local processing to spur the growth and development of the downstream industry, and players were encouraged to help boost the furniture industry.

“Our furniture industry is very small despite having

ample resources, and it pales in comparison to Johor where it is a big industry which exports furniture to global markets, including to the United States,” he said.

As part of its initiative in capacity building among young designers, STIDC has also tied up with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) to set up Kursi Pusaka to produce creative and innovative furniture designs for export markets.

“STIDC is also working on the establishment of the bamboo industry in Sarawak through collaboration with FRIM (Forest Research Institute of Malaysia) where a memorandum of understanding was signed in June this year.

“FRIM would provide its expertise in identifying suitable bamboo species in Sarawak and a trial plot at Sabal Forest has been dedicated to this project,” he added.

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Saying the bamboo industry has a huge potential in the State, he said this has been proven in the Anji county in China which was transformed by bamboo and its mind-boggling array of products.

“The whole town and its surrounding area were transformed just because of bamboo which was turned into many products including fabric, and even very comfortable underwear,” he said.

The minister said it is imperative that Sarawak sustain its timber industry which is vital for the socio-economic development of the state in terms of revenue and employment.

“The timber industry provides employment to about 100,000 people who are involved directly or indirectly, and its sustainability is vital as it is such an important sector in the economy of Sarawak,” he said.

Currently there are over 50,000 workers from 1,478 companies registered with STIDC.

The industry generated revenue of about RM6.5 billion last year.

Exports for the first 10 months of this year fell to RM4 billion from RM4.2 billion last year due to the sluggish global economy, with northern Sarawak contributing RM2.4 billion or 60 per cent of the export value.

Awang Tengah said the state government had taken a big step in re-organising and strengthening the management and practices in the industry by reviewing law and regulations, management and operations and good governance in agencies managing the vast natural resources.

The amendment of Sarawak Forest Ordinance and STIDC Ordinance and regulations were steps taken to curb illegal activities in upstream and downstream timber industry, he added.

He also said the public, in close collaboration with the relevant government agencies, had been instrumental in successfully curbing illegal logging operations in the state.

Among those attending the ceremony were Assistant Minister for Industrial Development (Investment and Promotions) Datuk Julaihi Narawai, STIDC general manager Datu Sarudu Hoklai and Ministry of Resource Planning and Environment permanent secretary Datu Sudarsono Osman.

## ‘Bamboo industry has a huge potential in State’

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Awang Tengah (third left) cuts the ribbon to declare open the STIDC Northern Region office as (from left) Sarudu, Julaihi, Sudarsono and others look on.



Awang Tengah (second left) is fascinated by the timber-based handicrafts at a booth. On his right is Assistant Minister for Industrial Development (Investment and Promotion) Datuk Julaihi Narawi.