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Artwright gearing to make furniture for global market

OFFICE furniture manufacturer Artwright Holdings Bhd has shifted the focus of its exports from the regional markets to a more global market.

Chairman Mirzan Mahathir yesterday said the focus was more on countries which have been less affected by the currency crisis such as those in the Middle East, US, Australia and China.

"We thought when we went regional, we would have been able to diversify our business but that was not to be the case.

"Late last year, we decided to work harder and move further afield," he said after the company's annual and extraordinary meetings in Kuala Lumpur.

"We're comitted to make this `conscious directional change' lasting... We are committed to making it work."

The company had identified office furniture market in the Asean region as having definite potential for growth.

"Our management efforts started and we already have country managers in the Philippines and Singapore," he added.

Artwright, he added, will continue to invest in infrastructure that will improve its distribution capability.

"We're confident we have a niche in the marketplace and we can be competitive by matching dollar for dollar (in product pricing)," he said.

Artwright's exports make up 38 per cent of its total turnover for the year ended June 30, 1997 - when the company posted a group pre-tax profit of RM12.61 million.

About 80 per cent went to Japan.

He did not want to comment on the export figures for the year ended June 30, 1998 but said the company had been affected by regional currency contagion.

"By the next calender year, we expect our transition process to settle down and we expect to do well in terms of exports in the year 2000," he said.

He also said the company had received many offers to market its products overseas.

Among the invitations it has received - for events to be held later this year - are international trade fairs such as the Index '98 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Orgatec in Cologne, Germany; Third Apec International Trade Fair '98 in MINES, Kuala Lumpur; and the Tokyo International Furniture Fair.

He said among the major office equipment supply contracts completed so far by Artwright in Kuala Lumpur are that for the Petronas Twin Towers, Maxis Tower, Public Bank building and MBf Tower.

It currently has a contract for the John Hancock Life Insurance (Malaysia) Bhd heaquarters, also in Kuala Lumpur.

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