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Exporters eye 10pc of world furniture mart

Asiah Bujang

MALAYSIA's furniture exports should be able to take up 10 per cent of the world's furniture market by the year 2000 if manufacturers take effort to improve their product quality and enhance innovations, said Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

He said although furniture export has improved to RM3.2 billion as of this year, it forms only one per cent of the world's furniture market.

"Within the period of 10 years since 1987, the (furniture) industry has shown a 100 per cent improvement and it is timely for those involved to embark on the "second phase", that is to create a niche market.

"To have such a market, we will have to sell our acceptable designs at a higher price to importing countries like the US, Europe and Japan," he told reporters after officiating at a seminar on Furniture Design Development in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

The seminar was organised by the Malaysian Furniture Design Centre (MFDC).

Lim said the main problem confronting the furniture industry is in the forms of duplicated designs and over production, thus creating price undercuttings which will eventually "kill the industry".

Earlier in his speech, the minister said the MFDC will be working on the mechanics and legal framework to register furniture designs of both local and foreign origins.

"They will be accorded intellectual property protection under relevant authorities and Malaysian laws," he said, adding that this will give designers, manufacturers and dealers their design copyright protection.

MFDC is aimed at spearheading the industry's move to produce up-market and value-added furniture products by providing a comprehensive range of services to manufacturers who wish to attain product design and quality.

At MFDC, local designers - with guidance and expertise from the Japan Design Foundation and other bodies from Europe and the US - will be exposed to designs and quality management for the improvement of furniture components.

Through the centre, furnitures from various designs will be exhibited and exported.

"Furnitures at the centre will be changed from three to six months for exhibition to potential buyers," Lim said.

MFDC will also act as a "one-stop" centre to facilitate potential wholesalers to place their orders at anytime of the year.

The RM2.2 million centre will be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed on November 20.

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