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MFDC-GRANT

MFDC PROPOSED RM5 MILLION GRANT TO KICK START DESIGNING COURSES

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- The newly established Malaysian Furniture Design Centre (MFDC) has proposed a RM5 million grant to kick start its designing courses here over the next two years.

Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said that the grant was important in order to expose Malaysian designers to international standards.

He said at least an initial sum of RM5 million is needed to start the courses.

Dr Lim was speaking to reporters after the launching of MFDC by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today.

"The centre (MFDC) has already forwarded the proposal to the government. We need some contribution to kick-start the courses and when the designs have been accepted, we will get back some revenue from royalties and the courses then, can run by itself," he explained.

MFDC is jointly set-up by the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) and the Malaysian Furniture Industry Council. Its activities will be private-led and market-driven.

Keng Yaik said together with the full support and co-operation of the government and the furniture manufacturing sector, the centre is set to assist the industry to attain a greater heights.

"I am very confident that with the introduction of this centre, we can push our furniture industry exports to RM7.0 billion by the year 2005," he said.

He pointed out that the furniture industry has done well in the last 10 years, with 17 percent increased annually and barring unforeseen circumstances, Malaysia hopes to achieve an export target of RM4.0 billion for the current year.

In order for the local designers to expand further, the minister has urged them not to only go for the low-price market, but also to concentrate on the medium-price and high price markets.

"To get into the medium and high-price markets, you must have originality in designing and that is why the grant is important to us to buy equipments and hire professionals to assist us in the courses," he said.

The minister also said that Malaysia can no longer rely on contracts on manufacturing under an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) arrangement.

Therefore, he added, bold and pro-active strategies must be adopted to ensure that the Malaysian furniture market continues to be a major player in the world market.

MFDC, he said, will be working on the mechanics and legal framework to register designs of both local and foreign origins. -- BERNAMA

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