

Malaysian Exhibitors Showcase Garden Furniture At Cologne Fair
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FRANKFURT, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), is showcasing their products at the prestigious Cologne garden furniture trade fair called SPOGA which runs from September 4 to 6.

The Malaysian products on display at the Cologne show include garden, terrace and balcony furniture, garden decorations, cushions for camping and garden furniture and others.

Although the Malaysian exhibitors are participating on their own, the Frankfurt-based Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) said that it would be providing any support they may need.

"This is an important event for the garden furniture trade and, if I am not mistaken, it is the biggest show of its kind worldwide," Matrade Commissioner in Germany, Mohd Sabri Abd. Rahman, told Bernama during a recent interview.

Export statistics provided by Sabri revealed that Malaysia's worldwide exports of furniture, wooden and other non-specific products during the first five months of the year amounted to 201.653 million euros, a 5.77 per cent decline compared with the same period a year ago.

The United States of America continued to be Malaysia's biggest market for this product category, absorbing some 50.458 million euros worth of products in the first five months of the current year, down 24.41 per cent from the same period last year.

Other important markets in the top 10 importing nations in the sequence of order were Japan, Singapore, the U.K., Australia, Canada, UAE, Saudi Arabia, France and Germany.

Sabri attributed the decline in Malaysia's exports of garden furniture and accessories to the slow economic recovery in many traditional markets.

"Expectations of continuing strong economic growth in Germany, for example, were dashed when the second quarter growth came in at a disappointing 0.1 per cent.

"Indeed, forecast from all the major economic institutes had predicted growth rates ranging from 0.2 per cent to 0.8 per cent.

Nevertheless, Gross Domestic Product growth for 2011 as a whole is still expected to exceed 3 per cent," Sabri said.

Malaysian businessmen visiting German trade fairs have expressed concern over the economic uncertainties in many European countries, including Germany, plagued by the ongoing Euro crisis.

"We have been seeing both positive and negative business and economic news about Germany in recent weeks, some of which may affect trade levels with Malaysia.

"Local developments are, however, overshadowed by the ongoing Euro crisis arising from very high indebtedness in several Euro-zone member countries," said Sabri.

According to Ifo, a German economic research institute, business confidence in Germany had dropped sharply in August amid fears that an overall slowdown in the global economy would negatively impact German exports.

Despite the macro-economic uncertainties that characterise the present business mood in Germany, Malaysia's exports to Germany surged 29 per cent in the January-May period of this year. German imports from around the world grew at a slower rate of 19 per cent.

Sabri predicted that based on the current slowdown in Germany's economic activity, Malaysia's export growth rate will not attain the record growth of 40 per cent of 2010, though Malaysia's exports will grow at "an above-average level".

Sabri also believed that the present troubles faced by high-tech companies such as Infineon and Q-Cells will probably lead to an even greater transfer of production from Germany to Malaysia.

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