

Timber expo attracts more exhibitors this year

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KUCHING: A total of 280 exhibitors have taken up 494 exhibition booths at the 3rd Sarawak Timber & Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Expo being held at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKC) from May 18 to 21.

This represents an increase of 48 per cent in the number of exhibitors as compared to 2015.

The biennial expo was jointly organised by the Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) and the Industrial and Entrepreneur Development Ministry in conjunction with the state-level SME Week 2017.

The event was declared open by Chief Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg by beating drums made of bamboo.

He was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, who is also the Second Minister of Urban Development and Natural Resources and Minister of Industrial and Entrepreneur Development.

Among others who witnessed the opening ceremony were state dignitaries, government officials and VIP guests from timber-based industries.

The expo this year involves 21 local furniture companies and 150 local SMEs engaged in food and beverages and craftworks.

Furniture companies from foreign countries like Vietnam, Korea, China, India and Indonesia also took part in the exhibition.

One of the major exhibitors is KTS Group of Companies, displaying their involvement in the timber industry over the years and their CSR projects.

Deputy general manager of Pusaka KTS Forests Plantation Sdn Bhd, one of its subsidiary companies, David James, said they practise replanting as part of their sustainable forest management.

“If industry players cut down trees for commercial purposes, they (trees) should be replanted to ensure the sustainability of our forests,” he said.

Besides that, replanting of trees is important to avoid the impact of natural disasters that can be harmful, especially to the locals, apart from conserving the environment, he added.

“This is what we all do as a player in the timber industry. We want the local people to feel comfortable living in their neighbourhoods by taking care of the environment in the area.

“In fact, we also take into account efforts to protect wildlife habitat and preserve nature,” he explained.

In addition, the logging industry players should also have a good relationship with the locals, David emphasised.

In addition to wood products, Pusaka KTS Forests Plantation Sdn Bhd is exhibiting other products such as lubricants like Shell Rimula and Stihl power tools.

SME entrepreneur Abang Farid Abang Taha of Sophia Taha Holdings Sdn Bhd said the expo shows what SMEs offer in Sarawak.

“The number of SMEs in Sarawak is still small but if well managed we can be as competitive as those in Peninsular Malaysia,” he pointed out.

He acknowledged that SMEs in Sarawak were still behind in many aspects, ranging from packaging and marketing to managing.

“SMEs here must invest more in research and development, not only on the products but in all aspects of the supply chain. Only then will our business take off and become sustainable,” he said.

Despite all the setbacks, Abang Farid was happy to share that his company came in second place at the Rural Business Challenge Excellence Award in Kuantan Pahang about a week ago, winning RM950,000.

“I am proud of what this company has achieved despite being in the business for more than a year only,” added Abang Farid.

Sophia Taha Holdings Sdn Bhd specialises in health and skin care beauty products using stingless bee honey.

Citra Baru Busana from Bandung Indonesia head of business development Susilo said they were very happy to participate in the expo and commended the Chief Minister for his very caring attitude and support for the development of SMEs in Sarawak.

“We are here to look for agents to expand our downstream bamboo products which are made from bamboo thread and materials to boost our shoes and knitting industry,” he explained.

Susilo said the materials are bacteria-free, have high sweat-absorbing power and are environmentally friendly.

“They are suitable for making T-shirts and socks and the products are well-liked by consumers and as the material is bacteria-free, it is odourless and considered healthy as it absorbs sweat,” he said further of the product features.

Susilo said the company also manufactures shoes and lady’s handbags, purses and wallets using bamboo and sheepskin materials.

He believed entrepreneurs in Sarawak could do the same.

Other attractions at the expo are the House of Acacia which displays home furniture made of Acacia timber and the Bamboo Gallery showcasing products made of bamboo.

Other activities include SME meetings, lucky draws, fashion night and entertainments.

The expo is open to the public from 10am to 9pm and there is a shuttle service from Imperial Riverbank Hotel Kuching to BCCK and back. The pick-up times from the hotel to BCCK are follows: 9.30am, 11am, 12am and 2pm and from BCCK to the hotel are: 10.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 9pm.