

**TIMBER INDUSTRY**

# Exports seen improving to RM23b this year

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Exports of timber and timber products are expected to improve to RM23 billion this year from RM21.86 billion last year, says Deputy Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur.

He said as the government recognised the sector's importance towards the economy, various efforts such as developing talent capabilities in designing wood furniture were put in place to ensure its success.

"The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) will also continue to provide financial incentives to strengthen local players' foray into the global market," he said after officiating at the "Second MTC International Conference on Wood Architecture" on behalf of Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, here, yesterday.

The minister's speech, read by Datu Nasrun, highlighted that the timber sector accounted for 18 per cent of total export earnings of the commodity sector and remained one of the major for-

ign exchange earners for Malaysia.

In the first eight months of this year, export of timber and timber products rose seven per cent to RM15.45 billion compared with the corresponding period in 2016.

Besides exports, Mah said the government also encouraged the use of timber in the building construction industry as it saved time and reduced the need for manpower.

Meanwhile, MTC chief executive officer Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Nik said the one-day conference, which was first organised in 2015, served as a platform for participants to gain knowledge on the benefits and attributes of timber.

"Various studies showed that wooden interiors reduce stress and improve a person's emotional state.

"Furthermore, its use in building construction in the form of engineered timber products reduces construction cost and performs better in fire compared with steel and concrete. The potential of timber is endless," he added. **Bernama**