

MTC taps further into the Dutch market

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KUALA LUMPUR: The economic relations between Malaysia and the Netherlands have seen an upward trend in recent years and the interest is growing among the Dutch business community.

Malaysia also appears strongly on the European business radar for a number of reasons, primarily due to its strategic geographical position as the gateway to Asean and similarly, the Netherlands functions as a hub into Europe for Malaysia.

The recent acceptance by the Netherlands of the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) under its public procurement policy for sustainable timber and its vast need for certified timber products to meet the rising demand of its housing sector, prompted the Dutch government to further seek business collaboration.

The Netherlands is also well-known for its spatial town planning and green construction methods which Malaysia can capitalise on and learn from.

The Netherlands is the second largest trading partner in timber for Malaysia after the United Kingdom.

The Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) in a joint effort with the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) organized a trade-related seminar entitled "The Netherlands: Your Base for Malaysian Timber and Wood Products Exports to Europe" at the MTC headquarters here, recently.

The seminar, which was officiated by the Netherlands Ambassador to Malaysia Karin Mossenlechner, brought together key speakers from the Netherlands who spoke on investment opportunities, facilities and incentives provided by the Dutch government.

"Dutch people like natural products such as timber. Just as much as we are here to encourage Malaysian timber-based manufacturers to invest in Holland, we also see Malaysia as an excellent gateway to the Asean region," said Ambassador Mossenlechner.

MTC Chairman Datuk Gooi Hoe Hin in his speech said that Malaysia could be a strategic partner with the Netherlands in reaching its target of procuring at least 90 per cent of certified tropical timber by 2020.

"The Netherlands imports about 30 per cent of certified timber products from Malaysia, making it the largest importer of Malaysian certified timber and timber products.

"We understand that the turnover in the Dutch timber and building material industry is on the rise. This is a golden opportunity for our timber trade manufacturers," said Gooi in his speech which was read out by MTC CEO Richard Yu.

Last year, Malaysia exported RM435 million worth of timber and timber products to the Netherlands which is the largest importer of Malaysian mouldings. The Netherlands is also the sixth largest importer of Malaysia's sawntimber.

Representatives from NFIA, the Holland International Distribution Council (HIDC) and The International Port of Rotterdam briefed Malaysian timber-based manufacturers on why the Netherlands is an ideal trade hub while the speaker from the European Forest Institute (EFI) highlighted on the EU approach to the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance & Trade (FLEGT) in Southeast Asia.

The FLEGT is an initiative by the EU in response to global concerns about the impacts of illegal logging and the promotion of trade in legally produced timber. — Bernama