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NEWS

- Increasing wood species supply through plantation concept
- MTC Board of Trustees
- Tuan Muhtar bin Suhaili is new MTC CEO

SPECIAL FEATURE

- Malaysia's furniture industry – Thriving amidst a pandemic

INDUSTRY FOCUS

- Showcasing the journeys and acumen of five Malaysian timber industrialists in various aspects such as advocating certification and branding, adopting automation, digitisation and digitalisation, and pursuing product development.

GREEN GROWTH

- Sustainable management of Pahang's forest

COVER STORY

- Breathing new life into old timber pieces

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

With the aim of uplifting the timber industry, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, YB Dato' Dr. Mohd. Khairuddin Aman Razali, has appointed and entrusted Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor and Tuan Muhtar Suhaili as MTC Chairman and MTC CEO, respectively, to spearhead this endeavour. The Minister has also finalised the appointment of Trustees to the MTC Board, which include several inaugural appointees. The management and staff of MTC congratulate Tuan Haji Mazli, the Trustees and Tuan Muhtar on their respective appointments and look forward to their stewardship in bringing the timber industry to greater heights. **For the full list of the MTC Board of Trustees and a brief curriculum vitae of Tuan Muhtar, please turn to page 7.**

While the current global COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the Malaysian timber industry as a whole, one sector that has so far been able to weather the storm and, in fact, improve on their export performance is the furniture industry. President of the Malaysian Furniture Council, Mr. Khoo Yeow Chong, shares some insights on the evolution of the furniture sector since its debut in the international arena more than two decades ago, and the various factors including challenges that have shaped the industry into being the major export earner for the country's timber fraternity. **Please see our SPECIAL FEATURE on pages 14-16 for Mr. Khoo's insightful thoughts on the furniture industry.**

In INDUSTRY FOCUS, we continue to showcase Malaysian timber industrialists who have contributed towards the development of the timber industry, be it through advocating certification and branding, adopting automation, digitisation and digitalisation or pursuing product development. **Bormill Wood (Trengganu) Sdn Bhd, Twins Furniture Manufacturer Sdn Bhd, Wexxim Holdings Sdn Bhd, Kayu Prima Sdn Bhd and Meas-tech Solutions Sdn Bhd share their business ideologies, journeys and acumen in these aspects on pages 17-31.**

Old is gold – that's a fitting description of reclaimed or salvaged timber pieces from, amongst others, old houses, factories, ships, public fixtures and furniture which have been reshaped and repurposed for various applications, aesthetically in most cases. In A CASE FOR TIMBER, we showcase several properties including private residences, a boutique hotel, garden restaurant and an art gallery where old timbers such as Belian, Chengal, Merbau, Kempas and Meranti have been given a new lease of life. **For a visual feast of these properties, located in various parts of Malaysia, please turn to pages 32-37.**

Happy reading!

The Editor.



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Increasing wood species supply through plantation concept



Dato' Dr. Mohd. Khairuddin launching the Community Plantation programme.

Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, YB Dato' Dr. Mohd. Khairuddin Aman Razali, launched a Community Plantation programme aimed at increasing the supply of wood species through the plantation concept.

Dato' Dr. Mohd Khairuddin said the programme was aimed at introducing rapid-growing tree species such as *Batai* and *Eucalyptus* to ensure timber sustainability, as well as reducing dependence on permanent forests for raw material resources.

The programme is also expected to raise the income of the B40 (bottom 40 per cent of the household income group), he said when officiating the launch on 7 September 2020 in Batu Kikir, Jempol in Negeri Sembilan.

Present were Malaysian Panel-Products Manufacturers' Association (MPMA) Chairman Datuk Wira Sheikh Othman Rahman, Plus Intervest Managing Director Datuk Chua Hock Gee, MTC Chairman Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor, and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Director-General Dr Khali Aziz Hamzah.

“The community plantation created will provide benefits to various quarters, especially to the B40 group.”



Datuk Wira Sheikh Othman delivering his welcoming remarks.



Dato' Dr. Mohd. Khairuddin planting a *Eucalyptus* sapling.

“The community plantation created will provide benefits to various quarters, especially to the B40 group. Idle lands, even in small sizes, can be optimised and given added value with the introduction of the community plantation.

“Similarly, the buy-back guarantee can help increase the income of the B40 group consistently,” he said, adding that the project involved 20 participants.

He said since 2016, FRIM, in collaboration with MPMA and Plus Intervest, had conducted various studies to determine forest species that could be cultivated and harvested in less than six years.

“*Eucalyptus* tree produces wood that is heavy, strong, durable and solid, making it one of the most valuable sources of timber in world. *Eucalyptus* plantations are expected to be able to meet the demand for timber in the future.

“A total of 822 species of *Eucalyptus* are reported to be found in Australia, New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines. These species are widely used for the production of pulp and paper, charcoal, and as landscape trees and oil paste.

“It also grows fast and can reach a height of up to 100 meters and is said to be the highest flowering plant in the world,” added Dato' Dr. Mohd Khairuddin. 🌱

Since 2016, FRIM, in collaboration with MPMA and Plus Intervest, had conducted various studies to determine forest species that could be cultivated and harvested in less than six years.



Group photo of the attendees to the event.

MTC Board of Trustees

The Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, YB Dato' Dr. Mohd. Khairuddin Aman Razali, has finalised the appointment of the following to serve on the MTC Board of Trustees:

- **Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor (Chairman)**
- **Datuk Ravi Muthayah (Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities)**
- **Mr. Mohd Kheiruddin Mohd Rani (Malaysian Timber Industry Board)**
- **Dato' Mohd Ridza Awang (Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia)**
- **Dato' Mok Khiaw Hui (Malaysian Wood Industries Association)**
- **Mr. Wong Kar Wai (The Timber Exporters' Association of Malaysia)**
- **Datuk Chua Hock Gee (The Malaysian Panel-Products Manufacturers' Association)**
- **Mr. George Yap (Malaysian Wood Moulding & Joinery Council)**
- **Mr. Matthew Law (Malaysian Furniture Council)**
- **Tuan Haji Hanafee Haji Yusoff (Association of Malaysian Bumiputra Timber and Furniture Entrepreneurs)**
- **Dato' Ahmad Nadzarudin Abdul Razak (Independent)**
- **Mr. Kang Meng Fuat (Independent)**
- **Mr. Mohd. Kamal Nazmi Kamaruddin (Independent)**
- **Mr. Richard Yu (Independent)**



Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan
Mohd Noor



Datuk Ravi Muthayah



Mr. Mohd Kheiruddin
Mohd Rani



Dato' Mohd Ridza Awang



Dato' Mok Khiaw Hui



Mr. Wong Kar Wai



Datuk Chua Hock Gee



Mr. George Yap



Mr. Matthew Law



Tuan Haji Hanafee
Haji Yusoff



Dato' Ahmad Nadzarudin
Abdul Razak



Mr. Kang Meng Fuat



Mr. Mohd Kamal Nazmi
Kamaruddin



Mr. Richard Yu

High-level visitors to MTC

Tuan Haji Kamaruzaman Mohamad, Chairman of the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) made a working visit to the MTC headquarters at Menara PGRM in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur on 8 September 2020.

MTC Chairman, Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd. Noor was on hand to receive Tuan Haji Kamaruzaman and his delegation who were briefed on the role and functions of MTC. The visit was also to enhance cooperation between MTCC and MTC, particularly in promoting timber products certified under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme. The visit included a tour of the MTC Gallery.

MTC also hosted a visit by Mr. Pubadi Govindasamy, Senior Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities's Timber, Tobacco and Kenaf Industries Division on 15 September 2020. During the visit, Mr. Pubadi attended a briefing by MTC Deputy CEO, Mr. Wong Kah Cane, on MTC's operations, and also visited the MTC Gallery. 🌱



Tuan Haji Kamaruzaman (left) and Tuan Haji Mazli during the former's working visit to MTC.



Mr. Pubadi Govindasamy (right) being briefed on a timber exhibit at the MTC Gallery by Mr. Wong.

Tuan Muhtar bin Suhaili is new MTC CEO



Tuan Muhtar bin Suhaili (above) has been appointed as the new CEO of MTC effective 1 November 2020. Tuan Muhtar, 39, holds a Master's degree in Petroleum Technology from Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and a Bachelor's degree in Mechatronics Engineering from the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). He is a Professional Technologist and currently pursuing his Doctoral Degree (PhD) in Business Administration.

Prior to joining MTC, Tuan Muhtar was the Lead Project Engineer in Shell Malaysia where he worked for 15 years, and with Perodua Auto Corporation Sdn Bhd before that. He had also served as the Chairman of Malaysian Palm Oil Certification Council (MPOCC).

Tuan Muhtar has extensive knowledge in managing mega projects, business planning, business improvement initiatives, manpower planning and human resource development. Having work exposure in The Netherlands and Germany, he also has experience in managing engineering design offices.

"I highly believe that with his vast experience and knowledge within various industries and multinational organisations, Muhtar will be instrumental in enhancing MTC's efforts in bringing the Malaysian timber industry to greater heights," said MTC Chairman Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor.

A humanitarian at heart, Tuan Muhtar has devoted much of his time in voluntary social work which centres on education and healthcare issues, among others. He has also presented papers and spoken at international arenas on industrial development and people empowerment, especially on youth growth. 🌱

Consultative sessions with industry associations

MTC organised a 'Consultative Session on MTC's Programme and Activities for 2021' with representatives from the six national timber-based associations to further strengthen the development and growth of the timber industry.

The consultative session, chaired by MTC Chairman, Tuan Haji Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor, served as a platform to discuss the issues and challenges faced by the industry and how MTC can further improve its services in serving the industry.

MTC met with representatives of the Association of Malaysian Bumiputra Timber and Furniture Entrepreneurs and the Malaysian Furniture Council on 6 October 2020, the Timber Exporters' Association of Malaysia, Malaysian Wood Industries Association and Malaysian Wood Moulding & Joinery Council on 7 October 2020, and the Malaysian Panel-Products Manufacturers' Association on 22 October 2020.

In line with the guidelines set by the government to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, MTC had limited to three representatives per association to the physical consultative session in MTC as well as allowed a maximum of three other members per association to join the session online. 🌱



Tuan Haji Mazli addressing the participants.



New chiefs for TEAM and MWMJC

The Timber Exporter's Association of Malaysia (TEAM) and the Malaysian Wood Moulding & Joinery Council (MWMJC) have elected new chiefs to lead their respective associations for the 2020-2022 period.

Mr. Chua Song Fong of True Acclaim Sdn Bhd is the new President of TEAM, and Mr. George Yap Hong Thien of Weng Meng Industries Sdn Bhd is the new Chairman of MWMJC.

Mr. Gerry Lim of Syarikat Kemaman Timber Trading Sdn Bhd and Mr. Ng Boon Kuan of Asian Esteem Industrial Sdn Bhd are the deputies to Mr. Chua and Mr. Yap, respectively.

TEAM and MWMJC are two of MTC's five Founding Members. The other three are the Malaysian Wood Industries Association, Malaysian Panel-Products Manufacturers' Association and Malaysian Furniture Council. 🌱



Mr. George Yap Hong Thien



Mr. Chua Song Fong

Timber dialogues with Nepal and USA

MTC recently held dialogues with international affiliates to explore the possibilities for Malaysian timber industry players to enter the markets in Nepal as well as the USA.

On 23 September 2020, Deputy CEO of MTC Mr. Wong Kah Cane together with MTC Regional Head for South Asia, Middle East & Africa Mr. Khairul Anwar held a zoom meeting with Ms. Bindra Pradhan who is the President of Interior Designers Association of Nepal (IDEA) and the Managing Director of Elephantine Enterprise Nepal, Mr. Delon Bharati. The four of them engaged in presentations and dialogued to exchange views in a session titled “Malaysia-Nepal: Market Challenges & Opportunities”.

Opportunities are aplenty for Malaysian timber and timber products in Nepal, according to Ms. Pradhan. Wood is used widely in Nepal in furniture production, furnishings, decorations, structures of buildings and houses, interior works (flooring, partitions, ceilings, etc) and handicrafts. The Nepali people also prefer customised furniture while demand for ready-made furniture is on the rise.

Nepal’s construction sector is currently experiencing a boom with an urbanisation rate of 20.6%. Resorts, hotels, construction of government office buildings and large government projects, and banks’ branch offices’ expansions into several major cities are underway. The Kathmandu City Authority has also planned for four smart cities which are pending confirmation while small towns like Gua Palika, Nagar Palika and Metropolitan are being converted into bigger cities. Several projects in the pipeline including hospitals, shopping malls, recreation centres.

The second presenter, Mr. Bharati, a timber merchant dealing in timber and timber products for the construction industry, had recently started a new enterprise to source for quality timber and timber products from Malaysia. He mentioned that the market size of timber and timber products in Nepal is not very big, however, there



are “sure potentials” for Malaysian tropical hardwood, especially in the joinery sector and in the production of window frames and doors.

Generally, he said, Malaysian timber and timber products are well-esteemed by the locals who have confidence in Malaysian import due to the support of timber associations and authority like Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) and MTC with an established grading system and a long history of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Meanwhile, exporters interested in the US market could take notes from the zoom dialogue session “Doing Business in the USA” held on 29 September 2020. Regional Head of MTC Americas, Mr. Chow Khoon Liam moderated the session which presented insights by two speakers.

The first speaker was Mr. Alfred Bolton who is the Managing Partner of High Point Exhibitions, a company which operates special pavilions, showrooms and promotions for exhibitors at the semi-annual the High Point Home Furnishings Market and the Las Vegas Home Furniture Market.



Ms. Pradhan dialling in from Nepal.



Mr. Bharati sharing at the dialogue.



(From left) Mr. Wong, Mr. Khairul Anwar and Mr. V. Kuppusamy of Door Master Industries Sdn Bhd at the Nepal-Malaysia session.

The second speaker was Mr. Michael Waggoner, President and CEO of the American Furniture Connection, a furniture marketing consulting organisation located in High Point, North Carolina, USA. Their aim is to advise and assist home furnishings manufacturers globally on how and where to sell their products in the US market.

According to Mr. Waggoner, there has never been a better time than now to enter the US market for furniture. Frictions between the US and China coupled with Vietnamese factories operating in full capacity necessitates other sources of product or supply.

The sales in the furniture supply industry has increased by 22% in September this year compared to the previous month and sales is expected to exceed USD114 billion should things get back on track by the end of the year. There are opportunities in the bedding category



Mr. Chow (left) speaking with Mr. Waggoner online.



Mr. Bolton sharing at the dialogue.

as people are staying home for longer periods with some even working from their beds while the second highest potential goes to outdoor casual furniture. Home office furniture demand is also on the rise.

Furniture Today's survey suggests that the trend would remain solid up to Q3 or Q4 2021 as many people have plans for new home office furniture within the next few months. Facebook and Amazon have given their staff cheques of USD\$1,000 each to purchase home office furniture supplies as they are expected to work on a hybrid mode – a combination of working from home and in the office physically where necessary. Selling of furniture would have to be via "omnichannel".

Overall, Malaysia has built its reputation in the US market with its high value products which are well-designed and sell well with incredible perceived value where the price perceived is much higher than the actual cost. Changing perceptions is necessary and Malaysia needs to reposition its image to the rest of the world as a quality producer. 🌱

Netting digital biz know-how in new normal

This year is where the need to digitalise has been pushed to the forefront even more amidst the Covid-19 situation. More and more business owners and decision makers have taken the step to move forward with digitisation and digitalisation. With this in mind, MTC has designed a series of webinars as steppingstones to help timber industry stakeholders navigate through the new normal.

While the July-August MTC webinar series has focused on a “Business Digitisation and Digitalisation” theme, the October-November installment of the series followed with “Digital Marketing” as the central topic. Knowing how to tap into the digital world and how to make one’s presence noticeable and visible remains a challenge. Thus, industry stakeholders had a chance to connect with experts in the digital marketing field through the sessions.

Present to guide participants for the first webinar in the month of October titled “How Leveraging on the Power of Social Media and Digital Marketing Can Help Malaysian SMEs to Gain New Clients and Markets at Zero Advertising Budget” was Dr. Daniele Gambero. The affable and passionate co-founder and CEO of Propenomy and REI Group of Companies drew from his seasoned strategic digital marketing consultancy experience to give participants a comprehensive yet clear foundational introduction to the world of digital marketing through spelling out what online platforms like social media consists of and what exactly could be done on social media.

“You must have a website. Your website is like going into a beautiful digital shop,” he said. “Social media is where we engage with them and bring them back to our website, and make them leave their ‘thumbprint’, that is their information for us to generate a lead and engage further with them,” he said while explaining how platforms could complement each other to draw potential customers in.

Besides drawing relatable examples and analogies from the battlefield wisdom of Sun Tzu’s “Art of War” to explain about the “Art of Marketing”, he also touched on search engine optimisation (SEO), e-funneling and social engagement. “Consistency (in posting) is your key to success on social media,” he said, among many tips which he attempted to pack into the one-hour webinar.

“It’s a give and take type of relationship that you open up with the public,” citing online publications, surprise and vouchers as some of the “magnets” for the audience to generate leads,” he said. “You give first and receive later. “Give suggestions, things which are useful to the public and conquer their heart.”

The following session in October’s Webinar series was titled “Building Your Digital Marketing Strategy in 2020 and Beyond” where Mr. Amir Haghbin, the co-founder of Wepool Sdn Bhd and its Chief Digital Media Consultant shared on the business-building aspect of digital marketing. He focused the participants on how to set targets for their



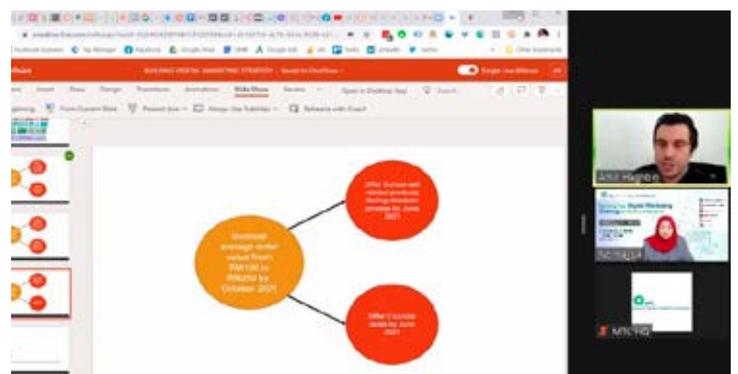
Dr. Gambero sharing winning tips on digital marketing.

business through defining their target audience, turning business goals into marketing objectives and best practice to remember at each stage of the process. With “geographical proximity not being a barrier anymore, where choices are many once people go online, we have no choice but to stand out,” he said as he launched into sharing about the importance of brand messaging. To be set apart from the crowd, Mr. Haghbin advised about looking into one’s own company core values. “Having authenticity is also important; this is where we must have integrity – integrating what we say with what we do,” he said.

According to MTC’s Deputy CEO Mr. Wong Kah Cane, the webinar series in October is geared towards educating and providing insights for the Malaysian timber industry about digital marketing and how it could lend towards more visibility and the exposure needed to grow industry players’ businesses in today’s digital world to generate higher sales.

Mr. Wong said participants can watch out for the next series in 2021 and the team is exploring new webinar topics such product design, architectural applications and brand, to name a few.

The webinar series while catering to the timber and furniture industry is also open to the public with business owners, CEOs, marketing managers, bankers, sales and marketing representatives being welcomed. 🌱



Mr. Haghbin spoke on strategising marketing goals.

Furniture China 2020 - Digital Trade Show

As Furniture China 2020 concluded after a five-day run on 12 September at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center, 11 Malaysian furniture companies had also participated in its concurrent Digital Trade Show held from 8 August to 8 November 2020 under MTC's new incentive scheme.

The furniture show, also known as the 26th China International Furniture Expo, is deemed as one of the most renowned furniture exhibitions in the world. With 3,500 exhibitors taking up a total 300,000m² physical space this year, travel restrictions during the pandemic has had the organisers initiate a virtual trade show alongside to accommodate more exhibitors as a part of its role in the industry to drive furniture business transformation into an era of digitalisation, normalisation as well as sustainability.

With the intention to assist Malaysian companies gradually recovering from the economic slowdown, MTC had introduced new incentives to encourage participation of industry members in virtual trade events. Under MTC's Special Financial Incentives 2020, nine companies received full subsidies while two companies received a partial subsidy to participate in Furniture China 2020's digital trade show.

The 11 Malaysian companies which had applied to join in the virtual venture together represented the variety of furniture product offerings available in the industry. They included Art Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd, Leo Up Enterprise Sdn Bhd, Simewood Product Sdn Bhd, Glory Forever Sdn Bhd, Cosmines Sdn Bhd and Golden Tech Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd, all of which featured their dining, living room, bedroom and occasional furniture products range.

Home-JS Furniture Sdn Bhd, KF Furniture Export Sdn Bhd and United Woodwork & Construction (M) Sdn Bhd had also exhibited their dining, living room and occasional furniture range at the show. Vistawood Industries Sdn Bhd showcased its children's furniture brand, Funbies while Alunajati Sdn Bhd featured its specialisation in manufacturing Teak wood furniture and fittings.



This year's physical exhibition period was extended to five days.

For this year's Furniture China show, the organiser's newly introduced virtual platform in the Digital Trade Show includes an enhanced Business to Business platform which ran on for four months. This new platform has allowed companies to showcase their latest brand products virtually. It has incorporated within its virtual facilities more exciting features to connect participants within a non-restricted virtual space such as Virtual Reality, Online RFQs, Video Meeting and so forth. Visitors can conveniently visit and browse the exhibitor's latest products and offerings.

This year's physical exhibition period was extended to five days with a "3+2" mode (3 days B2B trade + 2 days B2B2P, i.e., business-to-business-to-professionals new online retail experience), which provides a combination of both real-life and a virtual trading experience.

Historically, the exhibition had seen a gradual increase in its visitor numbers yearly. For instance, in 2019, the show attracted 170,057 visitors including 21,078 visitors arriving from overseas while in 2018, the number of visitors had increased by 9.82% compared to 2017. 🌱



Furniture expo in Terracotta city

The 19th Xi'an International Furniture Fair was held in Xi'an International Conference Centre, also known as "Xi'an Silk Road International Conference Centre" from 17-20 September 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this edition of Xi'an International Furniture Fair only occupied one hall in the international conference centre with just over 300 exhibitors present. The historic city of Xi'an is located in Shaanxi Province in Western China.

The main exhibits of the exhibition included three sections. The first one was The Customised Furnishing Area which featured Cabinet, Wardrobe, Cloakroom, Bookcase, Bathroom Cabinet, Door Panel, Wooden Door, Sliding Door, Hardware, Panel Products, Edge Banding, Smart Home Furniture, among others.

Next was the Furniture Area which featured Solid Wooden Furniture, Upholstered Furniture, Panel Furniture, Metal Furniture, Light Luxury Furniture, New Chinese Style Furniture, Classic Furniture, Ming & Qing Dynasty Style Furniture, Wood Carving, Furniture Accessories and more.

The third section - Woodworking Machinery, Raw & Auxiliary Material Area covered largely Customised Furniture Production Equipment, Doors and Window Production Equipment, Solid Wooden Furniture Production Equipment, Upholstered Furniture Production Equipment, Production Management Software, Furniture Semi-Finished Products, Timber, Furniture Hardware and Accessories, Adhesive, Paint, Coating, Leather and Textile Fabrics.

MTC East Asia had participated in the furniture fair with a 9m² promotional booth. It was the only Malaysian representation at the exhibition.



MTC East Asia participated at the fair with a 9m² booth.



Samples of sawntimber and laminated scantlings were among the exhibits.



Manufacturers of customised furniture were among the majority of visitors to MTC's booth.

MTC's booth displayed the following wood samples: Sawntimber: Merpauh, Kembang Semangkok, Sepetir, Kedongdong, Meranti, Nyatoh, Kasai, Balau; Laminated scantlings: Dark Red Meranti, Light Red Meranti, Rubberwood; Laminated boards: Red Meranti; and Rubberwood furniture components.

The majority of visitors to the MTC promotional booth were customised furniture manufacturers; whole house customisation contractors; retailers; and end-users.

Held for the first time in this new exhibition hall – the fairground was quite a distance from the city centre. Due to COVID-19, the number of visitors had reduced. It was expected that this exhibition could help exhibitors regain the "lost orders" in the first half of the year. 🌱

Malaysia's furniture industry - Thriving amidst a pandemic



It has been an eventful yet challenging year for the Malaysian furniture industry. On board in observing the tides and turns of the industry is the Malaysian Furniture Council (MFC) which has, through the proactive voice of its President Mr. Khoo Yeow Chong, revealed some constructive insights for action while steering through current realities especially the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges are truly nothing new for the Malaysian furniture sector, especially in the last 25 years.

“The Malaysian furniture industry started to aggressively explore the export market in the early 1980s, and by 1986, furniture export was RM4.5 million. In 1993, less than 10 years later, our export has exceeded RM1 billion” Mr. Khoo said.

“Henceforth, it had been a double-digit percentage growth until 2000 when it began to plateau,” he added.

Malaysia's niche, Mr. Khoo reminded, has been in the low to mid-range value furniture segments, which have filled gaps in the world market.

“We have been export-oriented due to a small domestic market and materials were sourced locally with Rubberwood being the dominant material.

“However, there was a raw material shortage leading to a ban in Rubberwood exports between 1990 and 2000 as well as in 2017.

Mr. Khoo says MFC has targeted an export of RM20 billion by 2025.

“We also faced a lack of skilled workers as well as being in a market that was increasingly diversifying. The challenges which we faced in the 1990s and 2000s still existed in the 2010s until now.”

Getting exports up again

In 2019, Malaysia was the 11th largest furniture exporter in the world. “In order to move up the international ranking, we need to add value to our products by becoming Original Design Manufacturers (ODM) and Original Brand Manufacturers (OBM). Moving from our low to mid-range specialty, we need to go into fulfilling the mid to high range furniture gap.

“Material diversification is also essential, like getting more imported timber material,” he said.

Governmental support is crucial for the Malaysian furniture industry. "The government may also play a role in facilitating in certain areas. For example, sufficient supply of raw material needs to be ensured.

"We need to also simplify the import and approval processes of new raw materials and species," he stated.

"Besides promoting a business-friendly environment, we need market insights and data to support the exploration and growth of new and existing markets. Also, more furniture manufacturing hubs can be set up around Malaysia."

Exploring more markets

While nearly 40% of our wooden furniture is exported to the US, opportunities lie elsewhere too.

"The US, Europe and Japan have been our traditional markets since the 1980s. While there is recorded minimal

"To move up the international ranking, we need to add value to our products by becoming Original Design Manufacturers and Original Brand Manufacturers."



growths in these markets, the Malaysian furniture industry may explore potential markets like Indonesia (for components), the Philippines and Africa (for finished products) and India (both finished and components).

The local market may also be ripe for the picking with an increase in the population and housing developments. He revealed feedback from the industry gathered during MFC's brainstorming retreat this year.

"There's potential in this area and in renovations. However, there is a need for more credible data and information to formulate strategies. There should be also more subsidies allocated to tap the domestic market versus the export market.

“Another feedback was there’s an ease of importing furniture from other countries, while regulations were once placed to emphasise on exporting furniture from Malaysia. E-commerce is also becoming increasingly important though many exporters are exercising caution due to logistics and delivery issues.

Facing challenges ahead

MFC has targeted for RM20 billion in export by 2025 based on its Five-Year Plan.

“The most obvious challenge to this goal would be the current global COVID-19 pandemic which has inevitably put a dent in our export figures. According to figures from MATRADE (Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation), our export was only RM326.3 million in April 2020 at the height of the Movement Control Order (imposed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19),” he said.

“However, we can take solace in that the furniture industry has recovered rapidly – our export figures by August 2020 stood at RM 1.29 billion. On a year-to-year comparison, our total export for 2020 from January until August (RM7.58 billion) has eclipsed the same period’s figures for 2019 which stood at RM6.88 billion.

“Among the challenges the industry is facing would be the lack of blue colour workers and we are working with the government to tackle this issue.

“Despite the arrival of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the furniture manufacturing remains a labour-intensive sector as a number of tasks are unable to be automated due to the custom designs of different furniture.

“Nevertheless, the industry stays committed in employing locals. Our doors are always open for any Malaysians interested to get involved in the furniture industry,” he reiterated.

Support for digital and beyond

Speaking of technological advancements, Mr. Khoo sees growth. “Malaysia has seen a greater adoption of automation and readiness for Industry 4.0 and it is the highest among office furniture manufacturers. In this context, this segment is as competitive as the office furniture sector in many parts of the



Market insights and data is needed to support the growth of new and existing furniture markets.

world,” he shared.

Digital and e-marketing may be the trend of the future but Mr. Khoo said exhibitions remain important to expose SMEs to international buyers.

“Perhaps, tax relief can also be extended to companies for digital advertising with more effort to educate manufacturers on this subject area.

To push the industry’s growth further, he is satisfied with present agencies’ and governmental institutions’ support for the industry in terms of trade and market development. “We welcome more industry dialogue and engagement with agencies and councils to have a common understanding on what is more effective, important, and in demand,” he said.

In closing, Mr. Khoo expressed hope that the government through its various agencies such as MTC could further assist all sub-sectors within the furniture industry including the mid-tier companies and non-wood furniture manufacturers in the form of added incentives for manufacturing and market expansion. 🌱

“Malaysia has seen a greater adoption of automation and readiness for Industry 4.0 and it is the highest among office furniture manufacturers.”

Bormill Wood

Moving up the value chain



Workers sorting the engineered door stiles.

Affable and full of insights gained from over four decades of experience, Dato' Lau Chen Nai, who had established Bormill Wood (Trengganu) Sdn Bhd in the east coast state of Terengganu shared his story and thoughts with us.

It all started in 1978 with Bormill providing kiln-drying services. "In 1982, we started to produce general mouldings and became one of the pioneers in Terengganu doing that," he said.

Bormill supplied general mouldings to the Australian and Japanese markets. For the former, it was mostly general mouldings such as casings, skirtings and et cetera. "For Japan, we worked closely with several furniture manufacturers by supplying them stiles and heads for double-decked single beds, and table tops to another company there," he said. "We used KSK (Kembang Semangkok), also Nyatoh, Sepetir and other species."

Subsequently, Bormill also went into manufacturing laminated scantlings focusing on the European market. "We use Meranti and supply mainly to Germany, France, Greece and Eastern European countries. Till today, we've been very successful in this as we supply to a regular chain of importers," Dato' Lau shared.

"Importers there would also buy from us to supply window and door frames to their customers," he said. Besides Europe, Bormill had also exported Meranti engineered door jamb sets manufactured for the Australian market.

Bormill also ventured into manufacturing timber decking. He said outdoor decking using Yellow and Red Balau and Kapur are popular in countries like Germany, Denmark, France, Holland and Belgium.

"Many people in Europe love to spend a lot of time in their backyards. So, outdoor decking have been popular. Many also bought outdoor decking especially in the spring and summertime to sit outside," he remarked, adding that backyards of hotels have wooden decking too. "Besides, Yellow and Red Balau have been widely used in jetties and decking around swimming pools."

Other than outdoor decking, Bormill also supplies balcony and fascia boards, wall panelling and indoor flooring.

Today, Bormill's key business is also in supplying truck flooring using mainly Keruing to the U.S. alongside their laminated scantling supply for the European window and door frame industry.

Sawntimber makes up 20% of their business while 80% involves the moulding component. They currently have 16 kiln drying chambers which have a capacity to process 1,500 m³ of sawntimber.

Sustainability that keeps on giving

Having been in the business for four decades, Dato' Lau's foresight and pioneering stature in the state and country's timber industry have afforded him some acumens and ideas for the sustainability of the business.

Highlighting the country's 'green policy' which helps preserve Malaysia's forests' sustainability, he said, "We have only harvested trees in areas that have been certified under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) which is endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).



Dato' Lau Chen Nai, founder of Bormill Wood.



"Terengganu is not the only source of our MTCS/PEFC certified timbers as we also procure such certified materials from other states such as Pahang.

"Alongside PEFC, the timber is also exported with Timber Legality Assurance System for Peninsular Malaysia (MYTLAS) licence, which is in compliance with the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR)

Such licences and certification schemes help give our environment-conscious buyers the assurance that they seek besides ensuring the sustainability of the forest which our business depends very much on. This is also important for our future generations.

"Fifteen years ago, when a Singaporean radio channel team visited the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, I told them, "This is not a sunset

industry' and I still maintain today – it is not a sunset industry," Dato' Lau said confidently.

To further substantiate his statement, Dato' Lau said the timber industry has so much more to offer. One way is to look into more sustainable and innovative products as well as explore potential markets for lesser known species.

"Another way is to maximize the usage of the timber including residue from the factories.

"By valuing all parts of timber, we can increase our income, recover more material for wider usage and also in the process, provide jobs as well as contribute to environmental conservation," Dato' Lau said.

Debunking the 3D's stigma

Supporting the environment also comes with how operations could be streamlined with the introduction of upgraded plant machinery.



Dato' Lau with senior management staff from the Malaysian Timber Certification Council and MTC at his factory in year 2013.

"Beginning in the year 2017, we have planned to invest about RM5 million to improve our production with upgraded machinery and automation as well as green technology such as solar-generated electricity," he said.

Upgrades can also lead to a cleaner working environment and less air pollution to comply with health, safety and environmental guidelines set by the local authorities," he shared.

Up ahead, Bormill intends to enhance its presence in the Japanese market with its high precision cut quarter-sawn timber using a pony saw, which the Japanese prefer," he said, adding that they're also keenly eyeing the growing indoor flooring market in China.

There may be uncertainties especially with the market adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but ever the optimist, Dato' Lau said with a 'smile' in his voice, "We will take the challenge!" 🌱

Wexxim Holdings

Solid growth potentials



Even though Wexxim Holdings Sdn Bhd consider themselves a modest operation within the timber industry, they might be giants in that they have steadily navigated their operations by learning to adapt, mitigating changing demands ever since their inception.

Together with her husband and the company's director Mr. Tom Hoo, Ms. Tan Huey Yee, the managing director, has been there from the beginning when they started by producing flooring made from Myanmar Teak and Merbau. It was only later that they produced some Teak furniture on the side.

Most of Wexxim's products, derived from mixed hardwoods, are made for the export market with 30% for the local market. For the local installers and contractors, Wexxim supplies to them using Merbau. Some of their local clients are contractors who work with IJM and Mah Sing, she said.

Automation doubles production

The company is one of the beneficiaries of MTC's Financial Incentive for Purchase of Machinery programme (FIPM).

"With our new machinery, our production has doubled up. We didn't decrease the number of our workers so for instance, without the machine, we would produce three rounds, but with the machinery, we could produce eight rounds," Ms. Tan explained.

"Another advantage I see with the machines is that it can speed up production and my workers don't get so tired," she added.

Wexxim has also its own kiln-drying facilities (five chambers with about 200m² in total capacity).

One of their biggest export markets currently is China where their timber flooring products go to. The wood used for the flooring is Perah, which is sourced mainly from Pahang.

Expensive lessons worth learning

It has been three years since Wexxim had started using Perah for their export to China.

“When we first started using Perah, we learned that we had to treat the wood properly as it is susceptible to pest attack. We are grateful to several respected timber industry seniors in the Malaysian Wood Moulding & Joinery Council (MWMJC) who shared their knowledge and experiences with us on the proper treatment for Perah to make it more durable,” she said, adding that was when she subsequently learned about pressure treatment.

“It really has been a very costly way to gain this experience, but without this expensive lesson, I wouldn’t have gained this new insight,” Ms. Tan said with a laugh. “But we’ve grown more confident in handling Perah and I’m very satisfied with the quality and beauty of our treated wood, which is acceptable in overseas markets including Europe for products like baby cots.”



Ms. Tan, Mr. Hoo and their daughters engaging in a discussion at their office.



Scaling walls of possibilities

One of the recent developments in the journey of Wexxim is its attaining of a sawmill license. “We never expected to be able to get a license for sawmilling as the priority of the state authorities is for value added processing. So, I think, it’s like a blessing to us after all these years of toiling and hard work that the forestry department of Pahang, the state where we are based, granted this to us as I heard it’s not easy to obtain one.”

With that, Wexxim is also exploring the possibilities of going into the decking market as there have been enquiries for this product. As they were exploring the new market and testing their boards for outdoor decking, they also discovered another product under their belt which has potential – vintage-look wall panels.



“A customer had installed some in his new restaurant recently. He told us that diners who came in kept commenting on the pretty walls instead of the food,” she said. “This panel is made using our special machine which produces this effect.”

The current trend for nostalgia amongst Europeans and Asians might just enable Wexxim’s wall panels to gain traction in demand, given the right marketing focus and efforts.

While gearing up for future marketing plans which include the further development of their online presence, they’re also looking for new buyers for their Myanmar Teak furniture, which has been Wexxim’s initial forte in production. They no longer produce Teak furniture, but the household furniture items they currently have are for sale.

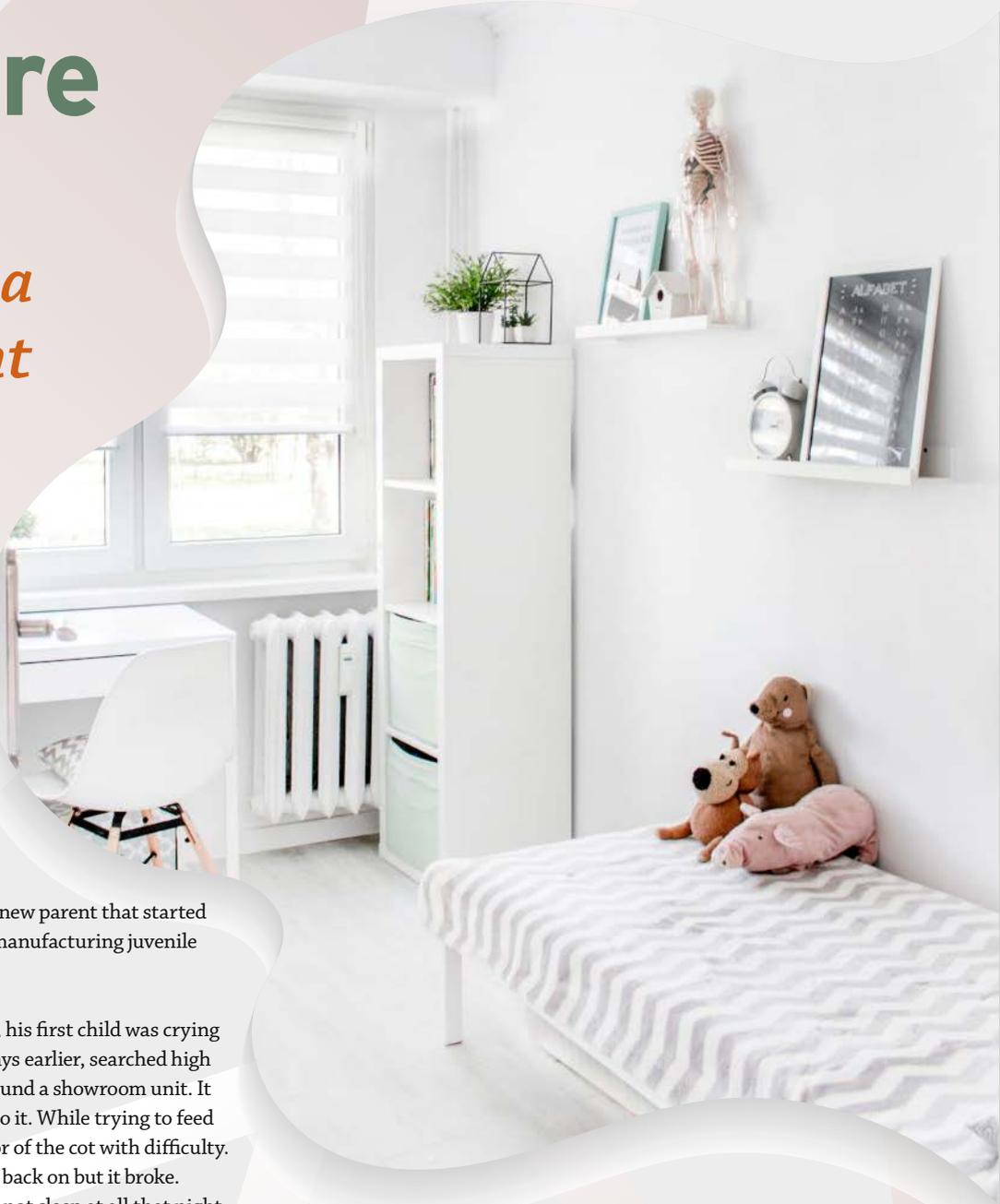


Besides supplying to the Chinese market, they had recently found the local market outlook promising. “Some old customers in the construction industry are returning with bigger orders (for flooring and decking) and several local projects have been ‘moving’ again,” Ms. Tan said.

“We’re also planning to explore the Japanese, Taiwanese, South Korean market for our decking products, but it is mostly still in the planning stage, especially for the overseas market as a whole.” 🌱

Twins Furniture

Success after a sleepless night



It was the need for a good night's rest as a new parent that started Dato' Stanley Goh off into his journey of manufacturing juvenile furniture.

One night in 1986, his newborn daughter, his first child was crying for milk in the middle of night. He had, days earlier, searched high and low for his first baby cot and finally found a showroom unit. It wasn't stable so he did additional repairs to it. While trying to feed her, he had opened the latched sliding door of the cot with difficulty. After feeding her, he tried to put the latch back on but it broke. Frustrated by the inconvenience, he could not sleep at all that night.

In the midst of this situation, he knew he could do something about the cot. "So, I designed a cot as a sample and went about marketing it. I received good response, and this was when I was still in the renovation and building kitchen cabinet business," he shared. The rest, they say, is history.

Humble beginnings

Dato' Stanley's story reads like a series of lucky breaks amidst challenges. He started working as a carpenter's apprentice near his home at the age of 14 because his parents could not afford his school fees any longer. "I was a fast learner, so in three years' time, I had started my own business as the boss of a subcontractor company. At the age of 23, I started a factory and got married at 24 in 1984," he said.

His fledgling baby cot manufacturing project soon garnered about 100 orders in the local market. "It was a good demand for me," he said. He gave up his renovation business to focus on cots and Twins Furniture Manufacturer Sdn Bhd was born in 1991 in Kuantan, Pahang.

Market expansion

"Then, someone suggested that I try to export to Singapore's Mothercare store," he said.

When he couldn't get the top brass at Mothercare Singapore to view his cot samples, he decided to venture to their UK headquarters to look for the key persons to connect to without even knowing who they were, back in the day before mobile phones and the Internet.

“Imagine, I carried a cot in an airplane all the way there without any contacts. Luckily, I had some friends who were studying in the UK, so they used their car to drive me around,” he chuckled.

“I even went to Mamas & Papas (another famous UK baby brand) to look for their purchasing manager. I waited from morning till afternoon,” Dato’ Stanley said. Eventually, his persistence and risk taking paid off with Mothercare and Mama & Papas becoming his major clients. He also joined a German baby products exhibition which also gave him a big break in the European market.

Use of local wood for cots

In the early days, he used Pine from New Zealand and Beech from Germany.

To keep his manufacturing costs competitive, he bought local timber such as Rubberwood, Kembang Semangkok, Nyatoh and Yellow Meranti to be cut and sawn, adding on the kiln drying and moulding processes in his factory.



Semi-automated machine saves time and paint volume.

“I exported the sawntimber and then used the smaller recovery sized wood for making baby cots,” he said. “That’s why I could give good prices.”

However, by switching his wood to tropical wood, he faced another limitation. “In Europe, Beech and Pine were accepted along with Rubberwood for their market which only accepts certified green plantation timber. So, my market in Europe now is smaller while my current market is in Japan as they have no problems with our use of tropical wood,” he said.

“Years ago, a lot of cots in the UK market came from Twins,” he mused as he looked back at his major clients like Mothercare and Mamas & Papas. “Now, when I go to Japan, I see that a large number of their baby cots in the market is from my factory.”

His training as a carpenter which demands attention to details has helped Dato’ Stanley develop his in-depth knowledge on every country’s specifications for cot safety standard requirements. “Before we produce any cots, we make sure our designs are compliant,”

he shared. His company's website gives visitors an inkling into their knowledge on safety. For example, slat sizes have been safely measured so that children's heads would not be caught in between.

Although Twins' slogan says "Specialised in Making Cots", the company has also expanded towards manufacturing dressing tables, drawer chests, cot beds, highchairs, cribs, rockers and cradles.

Moving towards semi-automation

With the challenging market in the recent years, Dato' Stanley said he had been very lucky somehow as he managed to receive full payments from his UK clients and even Babies' R Us in the USA before the companies were liquidated.

Moving forward, he plans to scale down his operations and consolidate his factories into one location at Gambang, also in Pahang. Along with the downsizing, he also emphasises on the importance of going into automation. "You can't avoid automation. I have bought



Dato' Stanley and eldest daughter Monica.



some machinery recently and have received 10% rebate (from government-based initiatives). If next year's Covid-19 situation improves I might buy more machines.

"Now, you need four workers to manually run one task. So, if you buy a semi-automated machine, you need only one worker, so you save on three workers," he said.

The prices of semi-automated machines, he said, are also becoming more affordable, thanks to Chinese technology. "The Italian CNC machines used to cost about RM500,000 but now, you can find machines from China costing RM100,000. They're good, cheap and efficient," he said while sharing about his visits to factories there to learn about their machinery.

Another advantage of using semi-automated machinery is the ability to save on certain materials. "I installed this automatic spray for paint. Before, I needed six workers to spray. Now, I don't need any workers for spraying. I also save 30% on my paint using this technology," he said.

At this moment, his wish is to slow down his production to about 20-25 containers of baby cots per month and also continue to supply at least 20 containers of timber per month. "I want to semi-retire and help others in the industry upgrade themselves, too," he said in a satisfied tone. 🌱

Kayu Prima

Bringing dignity and drive to 3D's



With thirty years behind them in its parent company, Kayu Prima Sdn. Bhd. is steadily looking ahead to continue its legacy in serving the international market. It was incorporated in 2014 under Sim Seng Huat Timber Industries Sdn. Bhd. (SSH Timber) which had been founded by Mr. Tan Leong Yeok in 1990. While SSH Timber produces finger-jointed and laminated scantlings, mouldings, sawntimber and engineered door frames, Kayu Prima was set up as a separate division for the purpose of its sawntimber trading.

“All our products are 98% exported,” said Mr. Chris Tan (pic left), Director at Kayu Prima.

His main role is in the development of the entire operations of the company, from procurement, quality control, marketing to its management.

“We mainly use and source for Meranti from all over Peninsular Malaysia,” he said. “Meranti is one of the main species exported from Malaysia and we cover quite a lot of regions and countries like Europe, US, Australia, South Africa, Middle East and Vietnam,” he shared.

Their rough sawntimber includes a variety of species and grades such as Dark Red Meranti DUC Select & Better (Europe); Red Meranti Sound and Better (South Africa/Mauritius); Red Meranti Merchantable (Gulf countries); Dark Red Meranti Seraya/Bukit/Nemesu Select & Better (The Netherlands); and Dark Red Meranti Nemesu Select & Better (Belgium).

Data and numbers tell better stories

After his graduation from the University of South Australia with a bachelor's degree in finance, Mr. Chris Tan, had been with Kayu Prima since its inception and is joined by his uncle and brother in the venture as well.

One of the areas of innovation to the traditional timber business practice that he sees as relevant and important is in the area of data collection and execution.

“To have good execution, I always believe in data and figures,” he shared.

“So, for every procedure or transaction, we need to have all the information recorded and presented. Thus, I have trained my staff to record and manage all the data records.

“With all the data collected we will have a clearer picture of what is happening. For example, we can see the costs, prices and expenses. From there, we can clearly know what we need to do to address any issues,” he explained.

Getting real with getting hands-on

As someone in the prime, he has often heard from the older generations that the timber industry is a sunset industry. Why would any of his peers, and who have white collar qualifications like him be interested in the industry?

Mr. Chris Tan shared his thoughts.

“This industry has already existed and is there in itself. In my opinion, it is up to the own individual to think how to move forward and I believe the keyword is passion,” he said.



One could not help but to sense the quiet determination and pragmatism from his analogy.

“In Singapore they do not produce forest timber right out of their country. Yet, they have been able to establish themselves in the timber industry in the past 30 years and are still operating today.

“How can we attract the younger generation? Well, the timber industry is also known as a 3D industry – dirty, dangerous and demeaning. Difficult, even. If you really want to be hands-on, definitely, we need to be in touch with the 3D environment.

“This business would not work if you are not hands-on for it is unlikely for this industry to change the way it works. For example, can we expect sawmills to be as clean as an IT manufacturing firm and have air conditioning in the processing mills?

“Therefore, it is up to the younger generation to think if this is a sunset industry or not,” he said.

A growth mindset is necessary for young people to consider if they want to be in this unique industry, according to Mr. Chris Tan.

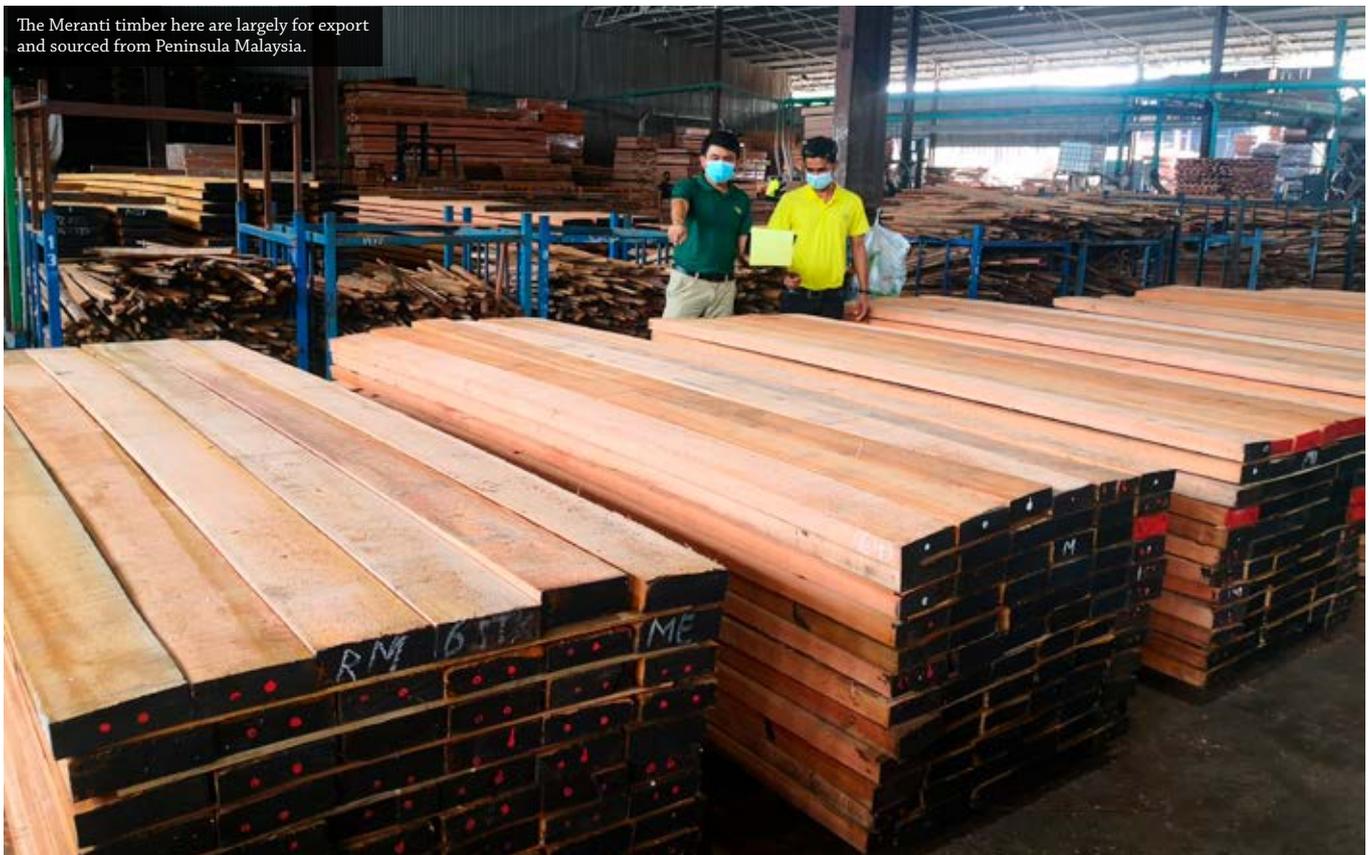
“Since 2013, I have seen a lot of changes in the industry. There’s a cycle of change in the volume of supply and demand every two to three years, so in this rapidly evolving environment in the industry, we need to be flexible and innovative in order to grow and adapt with the industry.

For those who lament about limited resources, there are options.

“We have to look for alternative sources like importation of timber and local plantations species. That would be our future,” he said.

Ever growing passion

Generation Y and Z individuals who believe in pursuing their passion might resonate with Mr. Chris Tan’s words. “Anything we do, we need to have the passion for it. Without passion any



obstacles we face will always be difficult and we will tend to give up easily. For example, playing golf means getting hot under the sun and it is difficult at times. However, if we have the passion, we will take up the challenge easily.

“What we need to do is just to put more time and effort, and this would not be a very difficult industry to deal with,” he assured. Perhaps, the answer could lie in how deep one wants to learn about an organic resource of the Earth and grow like the rings of a tree.

“Timber is a natural resource and there are too many variables in a piece of wood. So, in order to learn or understand about the industry, we need to be hands-on. If they are not prepared to be down on the floor, I think they should consider other industries because we cannot learn all the knowledge (about timber) just by the book or remotely,” he said. 🌱

Meas-tech Solutions

*Innovation,
one slice
at a time*



Although experience doesn't come served on a platter, Puan Rozilawati Ibrahim was all on board to dive into the challenges that her business brings. Her company's forte in producing customised chopping boards happened almost as unexpectedly as her path towards entrepreneurship in making and selling wooden products.

When the co-founder and director of Meas-tech Solutions started the original systems integrated company with her partner in June 2011, she had just finished a career of over two decades in the accounting and finance field, having worked both locally and in the UK.

After quitting her job, she was faced with two choices – a regional managerial position as a financial controller or her friend's invitation to start a business together. Choosing to take a bigger risk, she soon found herself in business projects developing physical fitness measuring equipment for sports talent assessment, commissioned by the National Sports Institute, Malaysia.

In the process, she noticed the CNC machines in their factory which was also where they produced the "Sahala Wuduk Station", a specially-designed machine for differently-abled Muslims to perform their ablutions before prayers, were sitting idle between production. She then suggested to one of her production managers, "What about making smaller items like chopping boards?"

They designed and produced the boards, testing them in the market. "Surprisingly, we found the market's reception very good," she said. "Our boards are quite unique, and we're doing customisation and personalisation as the trend now is where people want to engrave them with their names or brands."

Within two years, Meas-tech Solutions has introduced the brand Cantum which also includes a wide range of wooden serving boards, wooden serving platters, lazy Susan, decorative wall panels, tables, and chairs.

New products and eclectic designs have also emerged as a part of their portfolio thanks to customers' request. One of them was where ropes were used to connect shelf panels together at a restaurant. Another is an ergonomic cat feeder which was a customised order request by another customer. There was also a wooden centrepiece commissioned in the shape of a map.

Interestingly, the name “Cantum” came from the man behind the current product range’s designs – Ms. Rozilawati’s son, Mr. Rahiman Rahizar. He was looking into the concept of rabbets (tanggap in Malay) and they both agreed on the name cantum which means “to join”. Mr. Rahiman is currently pursuing his further studies under a Japanese government scholarship in the field of product design but still oversees the creative aspects of the company’s products and marketing.

Listening to customers online and beyond

There’s no physical showroom. Cantum displays all of its products online. “We’re active on the website but we also have sales at the Amcorp Mall bazaar, at Jaya One’s The School as well as at Mont Kiara every Thursday,” she said, adding that her kiosks could get crowded at times.

Currently, demand comes mostly from the local market. Expatriates at Mont Kiara like the South Koreans and Japanese love her products. Her Australian customers, especially, have told her how affordable her chopping boards are compared to the ones in their home country.



Meeting with customer cum owner of Makan Buzz, Mr. Amin and Altimet (famous rap singer) for new orders of customised serving platters.

It takes about three days to complete a personalised product order, Ms. Rozilawati said. It used to be about seven days. Customers’ needs are prioritised in that specifications of the designs are taken into consideration and discussed back and forth with the customer beforehand. “I know they’re only paying a certain small amount, but no one likes to get an ugly product in the end. So, we won’t start work until the customers have given their greenlight,” she shared. “I would tell my marketing team that we need to put ourselves in the customers’ shoes,” she further said, saying there’s great satisfaction when customers have finally received their products and said they’re happy.

She had recently also collaborated to work with celebrity Sheila Rusly to produce a limited edition chopping board for sale. “Sheila is very active in sharing her cooking talent on Instagram and has a significant fan following,” Ms. Rozilawati said. “We would love to work with more celebrities, and we have, in fact, been approached by a few influencers to collaborate with them in the market. It’s a good sign that we’re already visible in the market,” she said with a smile.

Innovation and branding

After noticing that wooden chopping blocks tend to grow mouldy with black spots, she set out to research various treatments that could be applied to enhance the durability of her products. “It’s a tedious process,” she said. “It involves three stages of sanding the wood, treating it with organic wood oil, soaking it in water, and waiting for it to dry until the final layer of beeswax has been applied. She had also spent time testing her products under various weather conditions.



Workers having a light moment at the factory.

Eventually, she came to formulate her own organic oil for coating her wooden products range. “We’re in the process of applying for halal certification for the wood oil which will be available for our customers to further care for wood products,” she said.

Future aims

Looking forward, Ms. Rozilawati hopes to get involved in more OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) projects where her products would carry the name for other companies. She is looking for opportunities for bigger bulk orders which would mean they can supply more consistently for customers. She also hopes to develop the brand name itself. “I hope to grow Cantum into a household name synonymous with quality wooden chopping boards.” 🌱



Completed orders from YM Puan Permaisuri Selangor for 100 wooden boxes as Hari Raya gifts.

Breathing new life into old timber pieces



The ground floor of the Telegraph Pole House where the original numbers on the telegraph poles (inset) remain untouched.

The word renewal is often associated with the process of restoring an object, the beauty and purpose of which have been eroded or diminished through time. Many wood enthusiasts prefer old timbers and actively seek them out for projects, enabling us to enjoy the timber's presence in our built space for many more years to come.

The buildings, featured in this article and all located in Malaysia, showcase the creative transformation of old timbers to feed into innovative contemporary designs. While some have incorporated new wood materials, most are totally built using reclaimed timber in the forms of columns, beams, trusses, flooring, door and window frames, panels and balustrades. Having been seasoned and conditioned over many years, the durability and technical stability of old timbers such as Belian, Chengal and Meranti are often surpassed and could therefore be reused many times.

Telegraph Pole House

The Telegraph Pole House is named after its signature feature – the supporting columns in telegraph poles. Perched on top of a hill in the Malaysian resort island of Langkawi, its blueprint adapts the native longhouse design of the indigenous people of Sarawak. In the initial

blueprint, the signature of the house - the large and extensive roof - was supposed to be supported by huge, chunky logs. The architect then substituted the main supporting columns with four telegraph poles, which were left unfinished where the guests can still find the original serial numbers on them.

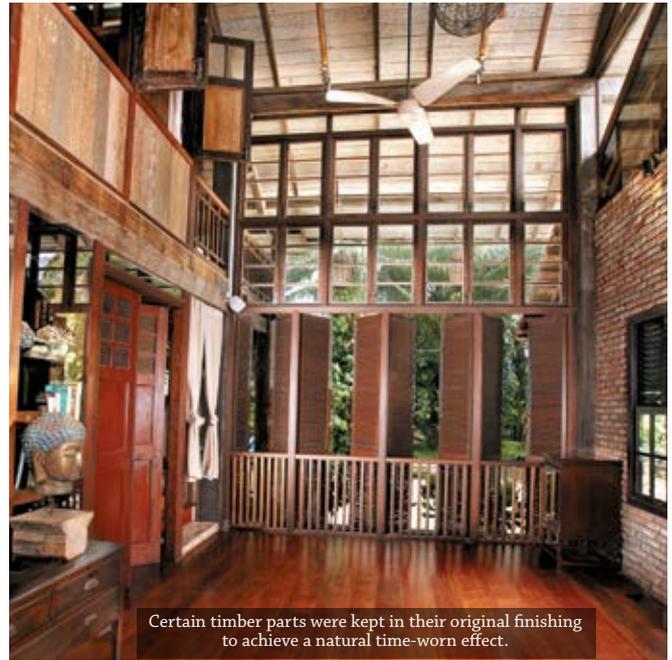
A sculptural flight of stairs featuring huge, yet seemingly floating timber steps are made of reclaimed telegraph poles too, leading the guests to one of the upper parts of the house, which hosts the resting and sleeping quarters. Moving to upstairs, the verandahs run the full length of the house on both sides of the upper floor. The reclaimed timber wall panels for the upper floor were sanded but not completely, leaving the remains of the old paint showing through.

A CASE FOR TIMBER

Gooi Residence

The Gooi Residence is constructed entirely of reclaimed materials: timber columns, beams, trusses, floorboards, doors and windows. This two-storey terrace house was carefully built with entirely recycled materials, including the unpainted antique bricks and timbers, that gave a combination of rusticity and warmth, and embellished with wooden furniture from the 1950s and 1960s.

The owner sourced a row of timber-louvered windows from old shophouses in Ipoh in the state of Perak and installed them on one whole wall of the reception hall, facilitating natural ventilation and sunlight. A simple timber balustraded stairway leads to the upper deck that has only one room with a dormer window for stargazing at night. Its 90-square-metre of flooring is finished in Balau. All the reclaimed timbers are sorted carefully for colour consistency, being sanded and polished for perfection. Its semi-open kitchen is furnished with cabinets and work benches that are made of reclaimed timber as well.



Certain timber parts were kept in their original finishing to achieve a natural time-worn effect.

Gooi has constructed the house using entirely reclaimed materials.



The “Longhouse”

Another building that is referring to native longhouses in the Malaysian state of Sarawak is the “Longhouse”. This building within the Ferringhi Garden Restaurant is situated along the beach on Penang Island. This restaurant is completed built from reclaimed timbers sourced from old warehouses and schools. It has used up a total of 150 tons of reclaimed Merbau. Sharing a similar concept with the Telegraph Pole House, this restaurant has a long, one-room space with exposed timber trusses, beams, battens, flooring and paneled walls and doors. The parquet pattern on the upper part of the wall was sourced from the floor of demolished schools whereas the vertical pattern in the middle was newly created to mediate between the top and the bottom panels.

A CASE FOR TIMBER



Recycled decorative and plain timber panels are stained to good effect and consistency at The "Longhouse".

A CASE FOR TIMBER



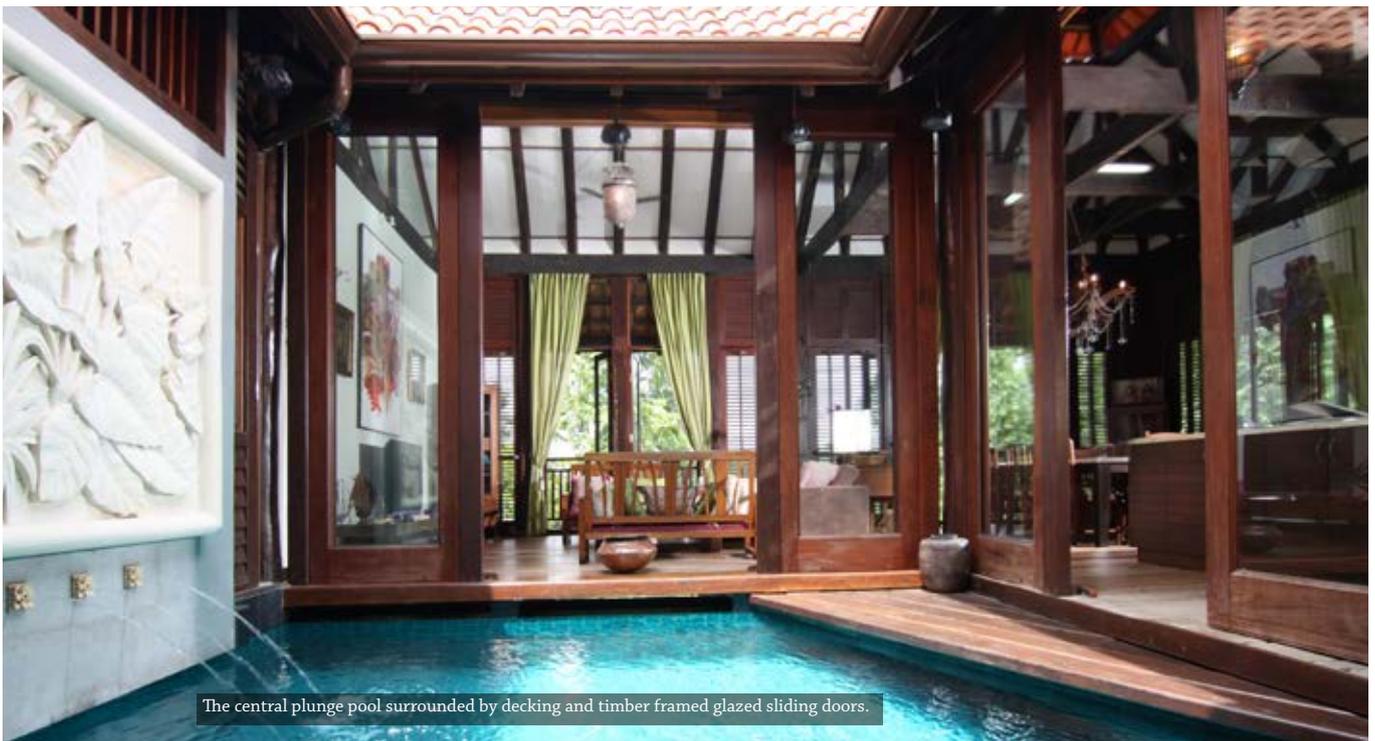
An old timber screen door with defined carvings enlighten the lobby entrance at Villa Samadhi.

Villa Samadhi

An Asian-inspired boutique hotel, Villa Samadhi in Kuala Lumpur has used salvaged timbers and components for the interiors predominantly, combined with polished concrete floors and white plastered walls. The usage of reclaimed timbers such as Chengal, Balau, Merbau, Teak and Meranti complements the polished concrete and bamboo, thus creating a distinctively raw yet luxurious ambience. Guests are greeted with timber doors featuring some delicate lace-like carvings at the entrance to the lobby. These doors were craved with Chinese symbols on their lower panels, by chance they were possibly once belonging to an ancient Chinese Mansion.

Almaz's Weekend Villa

Almaz's Weekend Villa is built on two acres of rubber estate land turned homestead in the Malaysian state of Selangor. This villa is constructed from reclaimed timbers, namely, Chengal, Balau and Kempas, where a plunge pool can be found right at the centre of the living room. The timber was sourced from old shoplots, abandoned houses and sawmills in the state of Perak. Among these old timbers, there are chunky 12" round columns, 8" x 8" posts, 3" x 5" floorboards, 2" x 5" roof rafters and full height adjustable louvred windows. The owner has also installed antique teak-famed stained-glass windows that came from Malacca.



The central plunge pool surrounded by decking and timber framed glazed sliding doors.

A CASE FOR TIMBER



The timber features exude warmth and cosiness, thus encouraging visitors to linger in the Wei Ling Gallery. Note the charred original floors and beams as seen through the tempered glass.

A CASE FOR TIMBER

Wei Ling Gallery

The Wei Ling Gallery's owner has creatively turned a gutted old colonial-looking shoplot into an airy art gallery space by adding a few wooden platforms that are connected by wooden stairs and bridges. Some square plywood floor tiles are laid over on these platforms, where several of them are replaced with tempered glass, allowing the visitors to observe the charred original timber floors and beams. The owner designed the gallery in raw and natural finish feel. Some of the ideas were a flight of stairs bracketed off two charred timber posts that survived the fire, minimal dressed walls and exposed nuts and bolts.



Kenneth Too's Residence

Kenneth Too's Residence was built with reclaimed Chengal and Merbau salvaged from demolished structures and an old Fraser and Neave soft drinks bottling factory. Located in Malaysian state of Selangor, one can find that the upper roof of the living area is up to 15 metres high, which serves as a clerestory window for natural illumination. Chengal, mainly used for structural purposes, made up the roof trusses, beams, battens and columns. The remaining timbers were used for flooring, door and window frames, panels, balustrades and outdoor furniture. 🌿



Asia's largest timber building at NTU, Singapore

Scheduled for completion in 2021, Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Academic Building South will soon boast Asia's largest wooden building at 40,000 sq m and features six storeys.

This new development will house NTU's Nanyang Business School, featuring smart classrooms equipped with the latest technologies to support NTU's collaborative learning pedagogy, where students devote more time and interaction with professors, classmates and industry partners.

The building will be a magnificent timber structure, creating a warm environment for learning surrounded by nature, said RSP Architects Planners & Engineers, the project architect, which is working in association with Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects.

The design aspiration is to create a world-class large-scale timber building, which inspires the human senses and stimulates learning.

Approximately 220-m in length, the flagship infrastructure development of NTU will have a clean-cut spatial configuration and architecture, due to the use of an efficient modular timber frame system.



Constructed using the mass engineered timber (MET) technology, material for the new academic building will be procured from renewable forests and prefabricated off-site for installation on site, requiring less manpower than traditional construction methods, explained RSP.

A CASE FOR TIMBER

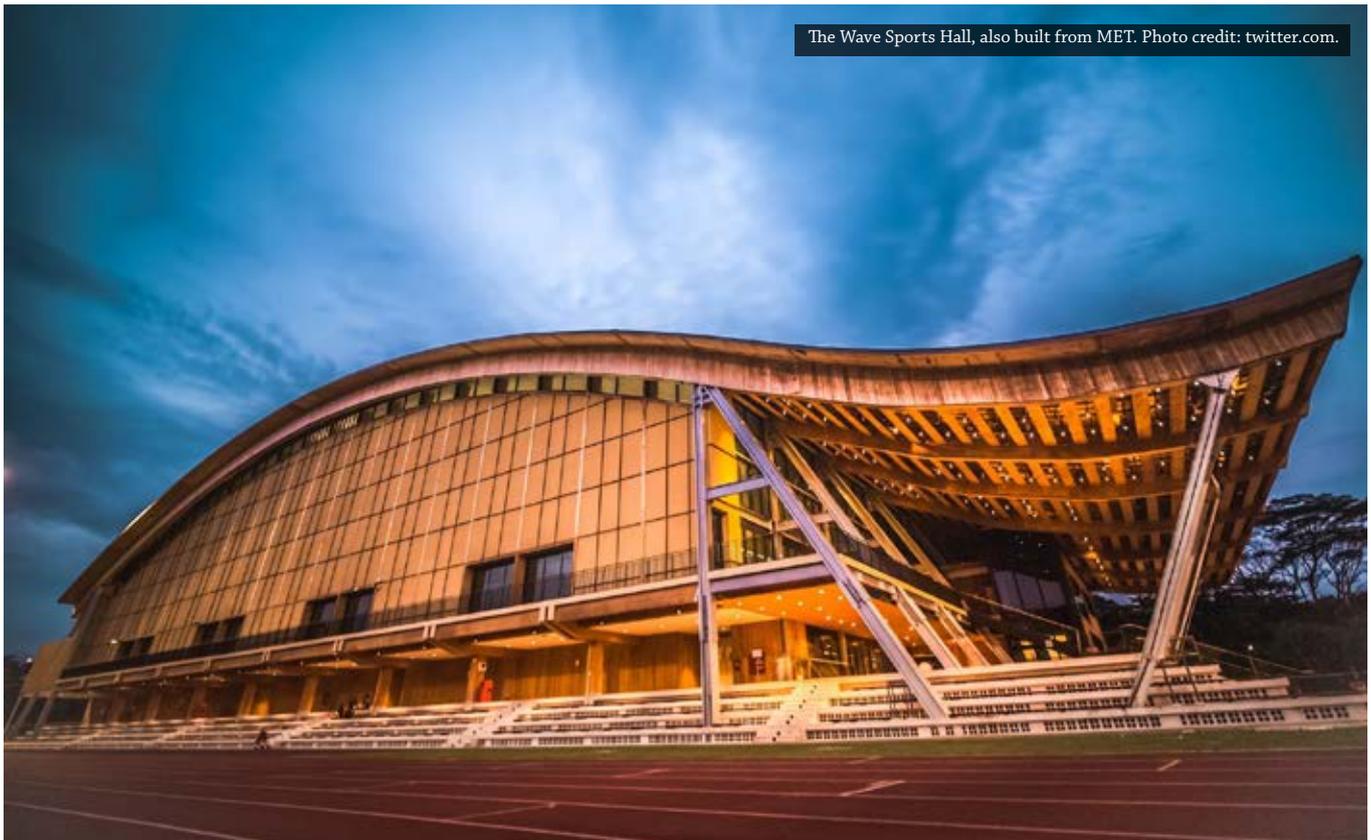
As timber is a highly renewable material, the use of MET contributes positively to environmental sustainability. MET also comprises engineered wood products with improved structural integrity, pointed out RSP, and its high strength-to-weight ratio makes it easier to handle than steel and concrete.

RSP further highlighted that the use of MET as a construction material is relatively new in Singapore. Being at the forefront of new building technologies and to encourage the adoption of MET, RSP worked with its partners to specify the suitable type of timber, and ensure fire protection, moisture protection, termite protection and acoustic treatment requirements are met.

According to Aurecon, which has been engaged to deliver civil and structural engineering services for the building project, MET will be used to build the development by adopting a combination of cross-laminated timber (CLT) for slabs and glued laminated timber (glulam) for beams and columns.

The new building adds to the impressive existing list of sustainable buildings on NTU's campus, which includes the Wave Sports Hall, also built from MET. The Wave was completed in 2017 and features five times better heat insulation than a comparable concrete structure.

As timber is a highly renewable material, the use of MET contributes positively to environmental sustainability.



The Wave Sports Hall, also built from MET. Photo credit: twitter.com.

The building boasts a continuous 72m wave-like roof that stands without the need for internal columns. Inside is a cavernous three-storey space with room for three full-sized basketball courts or 13 badminton courts.

“NTU’s new academic building will be our most ambitious sustainable construction project to date,” said NTU president Prof. Subra Suresh. “Ninety-five per cent of our buildings are already certified Green Mark Platinum, and now we are seeking to be the greenest university campus in the world.” 🌱

Source: Southeast Asia Construction & RSP.

UN Summit on Biodiversity

Humanity is waging war on nature, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told Member States during the opening segment of the UN Summit on Biodiversity, and one consequence is the emergence of deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and COVID-19. The degradation of nature is not purely an environmental issue, he pointed out. It spans economics, social justice, and human rights, and can result in geopolitical tensions and conflicts.

Guterres and other speakers at the Summit, held in a socially distanced UN Headquarters with Heads of State and Government and Ministers joining virtually, expressed concern that none of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be met by the 2020 deadline. They pointed out that 13 million hectares of forest are lost, and one million species are at risk of extinction every year. In the last 50 years, vertebrates have declined by 68%. If we continue down this path, food security, water supplies, and livelihoods will be threatened, as will our ability to fight diseases and face extreme events.

Urging an end to the “rape of nature,” Munir Akram, President of the UN Economic and Social Council, said political will, not finance, is the key to contain economic greed and policy negligence. Volkan Bozkir, President of the UN General Assembly, called on Member States to use the Summit to build political momentum towards the post 2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), expected to be held in Kunming, China, in 2021. Kunming must do for biodiversity what Paris did for climate change in 2015, said Bozkir, by elevating the discourse to the mainstream and placing it firmly on the political agenda.

The Summit focused on the theme “Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development,” to highlight the urgency of action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework GBF that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and places the global community on a path towards realising the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, “Living in harmony with nature.”

The opening segment included a “fireside chat” between the heads of UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, the CBD, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. They described biodiversity as a “shock absorber,” and said the time to “pollute our way to wealth” has passed.



The summit was held in a socially distanced UN Headquarters with Heads of State and Government and Ministers joining virtually. Photo credit: IISD.



Mr. Guterres speaking during the opening segment. Photo credit: IISD.

Statements by His Royal Highness Charles, the Prince of Wales, and a youth representative were followed by a plenary session consisting of statements by 48 Heads of State and Government and Ministers.

Two Leaders’ Dialogues took place in the afternoon, on: addressing biodiversity loss and mainstreaming biodiversity for sustainable development; and harnessing science, technology and innovation, capacity building, access and benefit-sharing, financing and partnerships for biodiversity. The first Dialogue, chaired by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, included statements by 15 Heads of State and Government and Ministers on behalf of countries and groups, and the heads of five international organisations.

The second Dialogue was chaired by Ralph Everard Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Isabella Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for International Development Cooperation of Sweden. It was addressed by 13 Heads of State and Government and Ministers on behalf of countries and groups, and six heads of international organisations and stakeholder representatives.

The Summit was convened on 30 September 2020. Statements by Heads of State and Government and Ministers continued in a “spill-over event” after the meeting. 🌱

Source: *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, Vol. 09 No. 752 / 3 October 2020.

High-level Roundtable on Climate Action

This roundtable was convened on 24 September 2020 by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to provide a platform for highlighting high-impact solutions that government, finance sector, and civil society leaders are implementing, and targets they are setting. In particular, it aimed to underscore the multiple benefits of sustainable COVID-19 recoveries which are aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C by achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The event also sought to encourage implementation of the Secretary-General's six climate-positive actions: investing in jobs and green business; avoiding bailouts to polluting industries; ending fossil fuel subsidies; considering climate risks in all decisions; working together; and ensuring that no one is left behind.

The roundtable also sought to keep up momentum by highlighting the urgent need for countries to raise climate ambition by presenting ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and long-term climate strategies in 2020 or by the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP 26) in 2021.

“The world has a high fever and is burning up,” Guterres cautioned in his opening speech. He called for: sustainable recovery plans; protecting the economy and society by acting in line with climate science; and prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities. He said all recovery packages need to accelerate decarbonisation and finance needs to shift to supporting renewable energy and energy efficiency. Guterres also called on:

- all countries to prepare NDCs and long-term strategies as early as possible and well before COP 26;
- major emitters to present concrete policies to reach carbon neutrality by 2050; and
- developed countries to deliver on the climate finance commitment of USD 100 billion per year by 2020.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, on behalf of the incoming COP 26 presidency, outlined steps his country is taking to “bounce back better and build back greener,” including through technologies, such as wind power, hydrogen, electric vehicles, and carbon capture and storage. He highlighted the UK's net-zero by 2050 pledge and congratulated China on its recent carbon neutrality by 2060 pledge.



Mr. Guterres calls for, amongst others, sustainable recovery plans. Photo credit: IISD.

On climate ambition, President of Chile Sebastián Piñera drew attention to Chile's net-zero emission economy target for 2050. He said policies to achieve it include a phaseout of coal, replacing fossil fuels in the transport system, and increasing forest protection. President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen highlighted the Commission's proposal to increase the EU's mitigation target from 40% to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2040. She said the EU is ready to engage in multilateral collaboration and form a high-ambition coalition with like-minded partners.

Closing the event, Secretary-General Guterres thanked participants for a rich discussion. He outlined three conclusions and goals:

- The common objective should be based on science, namely limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C and reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. For this, NDCs presented before COP 26 must be aligned with these objectives.
- All actors need to have their own net-zero transition plans for 2050, and all policies and regulatory mechanisms should be put at the service of this objective. Governments should create the conditions for this, including through carbon pricing and mandatory climate risk disclosure, and remove obstacles, including fossil fuel subsidies.
- Many people are already suffering. Adaptation must therefore be a priority and must receive financing. Adaptation should be given the same priority as mitigation. 🌱

Source: IISD Reporting Services.

The event also seeks to encourage implementation of the Secretary General's six climate-positive actions. Photo credit: IISD.



Sustainable management of Pahang's forest



Mr. Ismail Ali Kamarudeen explaining about the SMS system.

Feature writer, Joanna Lee, participated in a Media Familiarisation Programme organised by MTC recently and shares her observations of the efforts of the Pahang State Forestry Department in ensuring Sustainable Forest Management practices are carried out within the state's Permanent Reserved Forests.

Amidst enormous tree trunks lying in repose at the matau, a transit area where these logs are gathered to be lugged to their next destination, Kuantan/Pekan/Maran District Forest Officer Mr. Ismail Ali Kamarudeen was seen briefing a group of journalists participating under the MTC Media Familiarisation Programme about the practices of the Pahang State Forestry Department's Selective Management System (SMS).

The SMS is a highly organised system where loggers are held accountable to the forestry department and the state.

Within the system, a forest manager must make sure that concessionaires perform logging only at the area permitted and only within Permanent Reserved Forests boundaries. The concessionaires are also required to fulfil the department's set of criteria through the entire process from prior to logging, during and after.

Thorough A-Z process

After a bumpy rodeo-like adventure ride into the permitted logging area, the journalists had hoped to witness a tree being felled. Unfortunately, the rainy weather had put a stop to the felling. There were boundary lines spotted around the logging area. "Through the SMS system, you can see that this area has been marked to indicate that the concessionaires have been given permission for logging," he said.

Before any permit is granted or given any extensions for a stipulated period of time, SIRIM (Standard and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia) is also required to audit the applicants. "Now, as long as the permit is valid, it means that timber from Pahang can fulfil PEFC requirements for export, especially to European countries," he explained.

Prior to felling the trees, a pre-felling inventory is necessary. Head of grading and tagging unit Mr. Saiful Azmi Mat Aazid was at hand also to give a bigger picture of their meticulous task in taking stock of the types of trees. The inventory in this area, as reflected in a copied list shared with the journalists showed there were 176 “mother” trees in that area and 88 protected trees which consist of fruiting trees or trees that are homes to small animals and insects.

Then, the finest four “mother” trees per hectare will be selected and reserved for the next generation or rotation of trees for about 25 to 30 years. These “mothers” will yield “anak” or baby trees. Under the SMS system, even the direction of the tree’s felling needs to be considered to ensure the least damage to other trees, Mr. Saiful explained.

New trees will be required for planting immediately at the spots logged and even at the matau area under the SMS system.

Inventories of accountability

Several of the journalists were seen holding maps of the licensed logging area along with a summary of the area, the name of the licensed company, the contractor, estimated taxes to be collected from the logs, number of tags for different species.

If the diameter of a tree is less than the allowed dimension for a specific species according to the inventory, it cannot be marked for logging. Mr. Saiful further said that dipterocarps must not be below 60cm while non-resin trunks must not be below 50cm.

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Mr. Ismail Ali Kamarudeen and his officers at the Gambang mobile inspection station.

The analog Integrated Forest Information System is currently taken over by the online Teknolog software.



Colours are used in the tagging system to demarcate the different types of trees in the area. For instance, blue tags are for mother trees, yellow tags for protected species, and orange tags are for the trees which will be felled for construction of logging roads within the harvesting area. Then, white tags will go on trees marked for felling. Endangered species will not be tagged as they cannot be cut.

Keeping an eye on concessionaires

“From time to time, we will monitor the concessionaires, but for shorter periods of (monthly) licences, their logging boundaries will be checked along with the trees that had been felled. We will check their workers, staff living quarters, transporting roadways and the general environment of their permissible logging area. The state forestry department had successfully apprehended illegal logging activities in 2018 and in October 2020, they issued stop-work orders to investigate claims of a river pollution in a permitted Lentang forest logging area,” said Mr. Ismail.

For non-virgin forest, the state only permits a logging area of 75m² per hectare for standing trees. On average, the state of Pahang grants permission to an average of 70 licensees per year.

Trees that have been logged will be transported next to a mobile inspection station. Here, inspection will be performed to ensure the right amount of taxes which is required to be paid to the state government and this is checked against the number of logs transported out. Head of the inspection station at Gambang, Mr. Mohamad Nasir showed the journalists the Integrated Forest Information System programme or “sistem integrasi maklumat perhutanan” (SIMP). This online system captures the amount of tax which has been paid by the logging company.

He explained that when trees arrive, they will be measured. “After the measurement, we will check if the numbers match with the recorded tree species and their numbers in the inventory logbook. We check to make sure these tree logs are the ones that have already been tagged for logging.”



The authorised hammer to mark logs.

Officers will inspect invoices, check on the tagging record, inspect the lorries and measure the logs, record the information and enter them into the system. Once everything tallies, officers will hand over an ‘authorised hammer’ to the company to mark their logs.

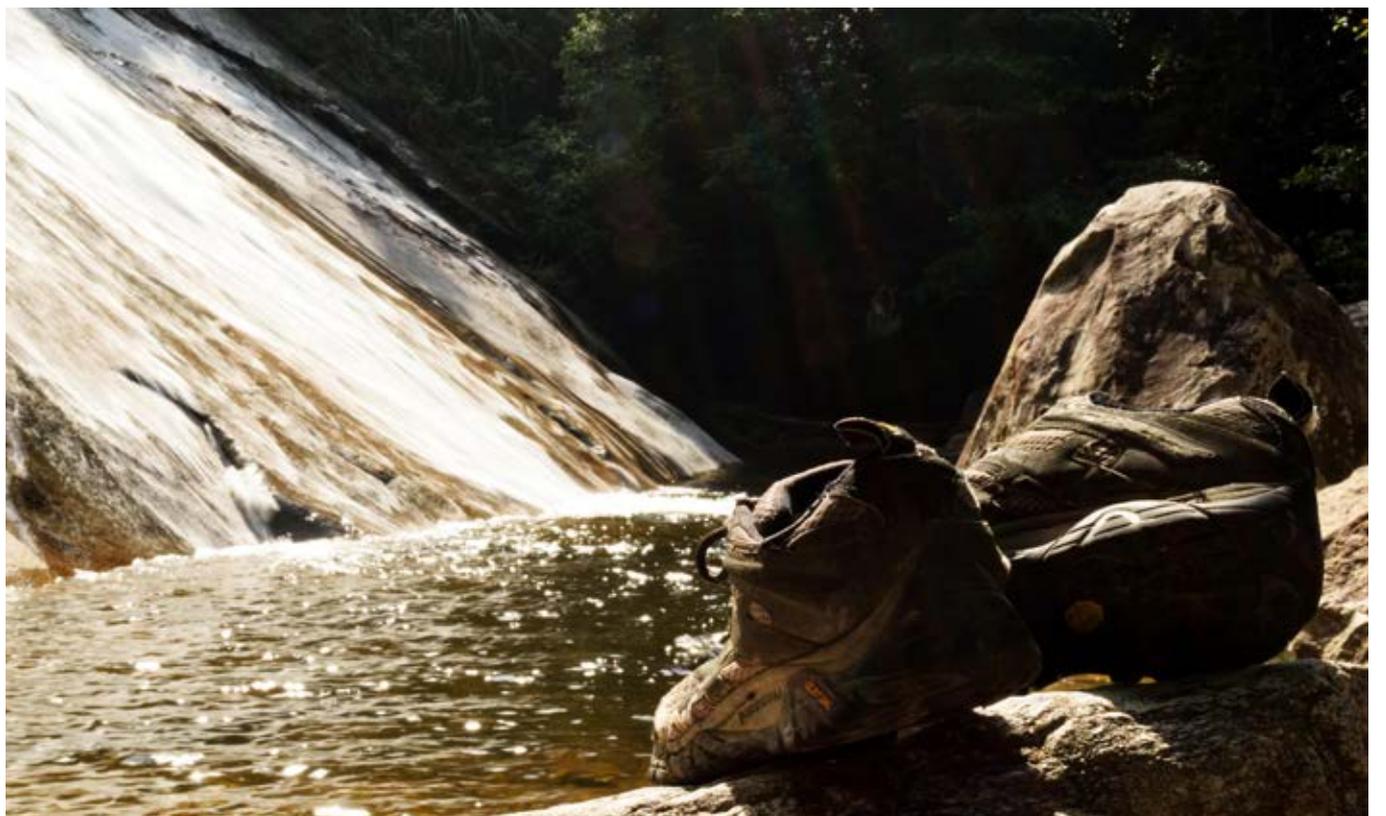
The state forestry department has converted the log inspection process to an online system called “Teknolog” where a QR code will be assigned to each log. A simple scan will yield the information of each log’s species and size. Concessionaires would now have to measure the logs instead of the officers measuring them one by one at the station. They would also be fined if wrong measurements are found during counter-checking measures by inspectors. “We’ve been providing training to officers before using the Teknolog system and so far, everything has been smooth,” Encik Ismail said.

Indeed, the SMS system must be in place to ensure sustainability of the forests in Pahang remains in an uninterrupted mode. 🌱

Bridge leading up to Gunung Stong's trails. Photo credit: www.teaisfortravel.wordpress.com



Gunung Stong State Forest Park, Kelantan



Relaxing up close at Jelawang Waterfalls. Photo credit: www.teaisfortravel.wordpress.com



Viewing the sunrise from Camp Baha. Photo credit: www.teaisfortravel.wordpress.com

Little gem with big potentials

Wau bulan, wayang kulit performances, wooden boats and fair Malay ladies wearing gold on their ankles, and not to mention ayam percik and nasi kerabu – these are what comes to mind when we think about Kelantan. However, the state also known as the “Cradle of Malay Culture” also boasts a green hidden gem found about 46 km from Bandar Jeli and about 3 km from the town of Dabong.

The Gunung Stong State Forest Park (GSSFP) is lush forest reserve covering 21,950 hectares. It comes under the purview of the Kelantan State Forestry Department and has been gazetted as a state park and site for eco-tourism ever since 2007 under the State-adopted National Forestry Act 1984.

GSSFP is home to the tallest waterfall in Southeast Asia, known as Jelawang Waterfalls or Stong Waterfall. Visitors approaching the park will get a glimpse of the seven-tiered waterfall dropping like a mystical white veil from its 1404m height above sea level.

Upon entering the park, those wishing to relax at the base of Jelawang Waterfall can take a 10-minute walk to the site. Hikers love to frequent its trail to towards the top of the waterfall where Baha Camp is situated. From the campsite, more adventurous hikers can take several trails to reach the summits of either the 1422m Gunung Stong for which the park is named after or other adjoining mountains like Gunung Ayam, Gunung Tera and Gunung Che Tahir. A 30-minute trek from Baha Camp will also bring visitors to the Last Waterfall.

Besides setting up camp at Baha, visitors to the park can also stay at either the Gunung Stong State Park Resort, Stong Hill Resort or Maya Chalet.

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Those who love more adventure could explore the caves at this park, namely Gua Gelap (Dark Cave), Gua Kris (Sword Cave), Gua Pagar (Fence Cave) and Gua Ikan (Fish Cave). Some of the caves like Gua Gelap are very narrow where one would be required to lie flat in order to navigate some of its passages.

Sightings of elephants, tapirs, and other interesting fauna have been reported, indicative of the rich diversity of mammals, insects, birds and plants found here. What's even more diverse is the species of trees found in GSSFP. A scientific study of the state park for the purpose of sustainability using airborne hyperspectral imaging technology system was published in 2009. The images showed the abundance of timber species such as the Merpauh, Minyak Berok, Kembang Semangkok, Meranti Seraya with many of the species listed in the forest as having trunk diameters smaller than 55cm.

Nearly 10 years after that study, the state park's allure is not lost with a call to explore its potentials as a national geopark. Researchers investigating Gunung Stong have admitted the location is very unique in the aspects of rock diversity (petrology), its geological structure, geomorphology and its complex history of rock formations.

While the rocks that have laid still there through time are in no hurry to be seen, so much more of nature's treasures seem to await the discovery by Malaysians and the world, especially the ones who would inherit the secrets yet known with this pristine state forest park. 🌿

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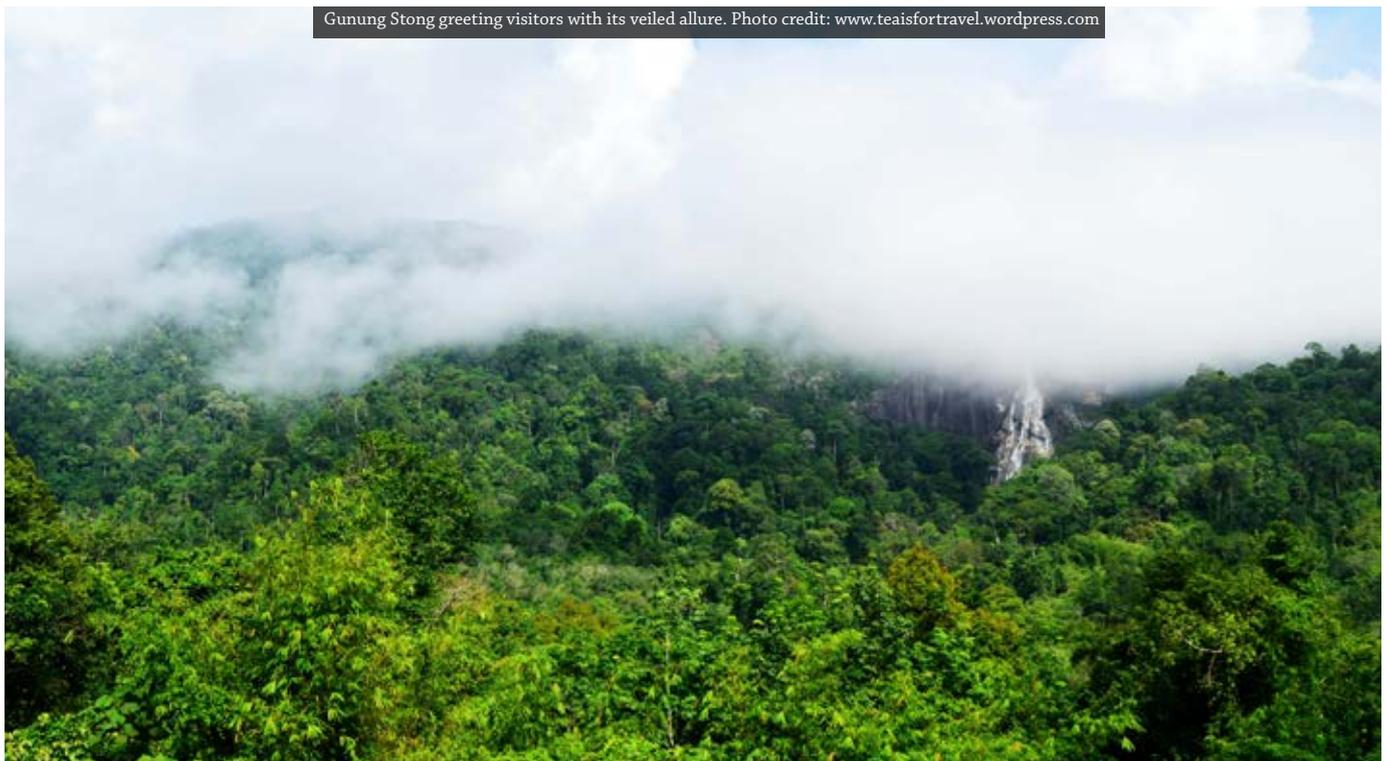
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**Nearly 10 years
after that study,
the state park's
allure is not
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Gunung Stong greeting visitors with its veiled allure. Photo credit: www.teaisfortravel.wordpress.com



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