

# MIFF returns after a two-year hiatus as global economies reopen

Izzul Ikram / theedgemarkets.com

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KUALA LUMPUR (July 6): Following a two-year hiatus, the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) has returned, boasting 200 exhibitors from 11 countries and regions, with 5,000 pre-registered visitors and buyers.

Malaysia External Trade Development Corp (MATRADE) deputy chief executive officer Abu Bakar Yusof — who officiated at the event — said that the MIFF is the first international-scale furniture event in Asia held this year, serving as a silver lining for furniture makers to source for new customers and enter new export markets.

"Being among the world's 10th biggest exporters of furniture and furniture parts, Malaysia has a vital role to undertake global furniture demand and remain competitive with other big players.

"From its humble beginnings as cottage-based productions in the early 1980s, offering a small number of products for the domestic market, the industry has evolved into a multibillion-ringgit export powerhouse within a period of three decades, leveraging on the immense development in technologies and new opportunities abound," he said in his keynote address for the event.

Abu Bakar highlighted that 85% of Malaysia's annual furniture production is exported to over 160 countries, with the nation posting record-high export values of furniture products of RM12.86 billion and RM12.58 billion for 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Abu Bakar noted that while the past two years were "devastating" for the furniture sector, industry players managed to weather the storm and demonstrate their strengths, given the all-time-high export values seen in 2020 and 2021.

"Rain or shine, the show must go on. Although the pandemic caused major disruptions and affected global trade, the Malaysian business community remained resilient following strong global demand which led to a resurgence in trade activities," he added.

Meanwhile, for the five-month period ended May 2022, Abu Bakar said Malaysia's total furniture exports were valued at RM6.14 billion, an increase of 3.2% from RM5.96 billion in the same period a year prior.

He highlighted that labour shortfalls in the furniture industry has called for players to go beyond their "current industry 3.0 production" into more advanced machinery, innovative technologies, as well as automation, to reduce their dependence on manual labour.

"Technological innovations will lead the industry in achieving a competitive advantage as well as increased productivity, achieve higher efficiency and expand their market segmentation to be on par with global competitors," he added.

MIFF founder and chairman Datuk Dr Tan Chin Huat said that the trade fair has decided to resume, as furniture retailers' are concerned over the supply chain disruptions and securing suppliers as economies around the world gradually reopen.

"As Malaysia's largest furniture export platform, MIFF is here to support the recovery of the national economy and to help deliver the message that Malaysia is back in business," he said in his welcome speech.

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*Edited by Ahmad Naqib Idris*