

Welcoming the Age of Wood

The Malaysian Timber Council's International Conference on Wood Architecture highlights why timber is the star building material of the 21st century.



YB Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur, Deputy Minister of the Plantation Industries and Commodities officiated MTC 2nd International Conference on Wood Architecture 2017

A magnificent building material like timber should not be reduced to secondary functions and Malaysian architects as well as structural engineers need to re-look the use of timber in architecture. As the world moves towards changing building code regulations to accommodate timber high-rises, Malaysia should consider revisiting its building tradition with this old-school material.

This was the message conveyed by the distinguished panel of speakers at the Malaysian Timber Council's (MTC) International Conference on Wood Architecture at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre recently.

MTC's panel of speakers for the

conference included Andrew Waugh, Norihide Imagawa, Kevin Hill and Boris Iskra, who are world-renowned architects and engineers. Malaysian architects Almaz Salma Abdul Rahim and Azman Md Nor, who were the first and second prize winners, respectively, of MTC's inaugural Malaysian Wood Awards 2017, spoke on their winning designs as well as on their other timber-based structures.

Following the success of its first international conference on Wood Architecture in 2015, MTC organised the second edition not only to promote the use of timber and timber products but to highlight the need to change the mindsets of those in the construction industry,

especially that of architects, engineers, developers and builders.

Deputy Minister of the Plantation Industries and Commodities YB Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur officiated at the opening ceremony on behalf of the Minister YB Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong. Also present was MTC Chief Executive Officer Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Nik. About 400 participants, comprising architects, engineers, developers, academicians and architecture students attended the conference.

In his speech read by Nasrun, Mah said the players in the construction industry will find themselves in a transition period and will have to employ a different attitude



Opening Speech by Deputy Minister of the Plantation Industries and Commodities, YB Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur

which would be a more nurturing one when they build with timber as the government institutes various initiatives such as the Industrialised Building System or IBS.

"Under the IBS, components such as timber frames will be prefabricated or manufactured onsite to improve productivity and reduce onsite construction waste. The use of IBS components with a minimum score of 70 per cent in government projects has been made mandatory. IBS is also expected to improve productivity by 2.5 times," said Mah.

He added that in the recent Budget 2018, the prime minister had announced various initiatives to strengthen SMEs as well as enhancing automation and Bumiputera entrepreneurship.

Despite being a rich timber-producing nation, Malaysia has very little timber high-rise buildings. Mah hoped that there will be more timber-based projects in

the future and the full cooperation of the developers, architects and engineers is required for this.

"There are clear-cut advantages to using timber as it speeds up the construction process which result in cost-saving measures. In Europe, four-storey buildings can be built every three days. Technological advancements have also led to the creation of engineered timber products which have a protective charring layer that enable it to maintain its structural integrity unlike steel which buckles under intense heat. As one of nature's greatest storehouses of atmospheric carbon, timber is also in the spotlight due to its ability to withstand high seismic activities," said Abdul Rahim, adding that there is no reason to deny timber of its rightful place in the construction industry.

The speakers highlighted the advantages of using timber, which is now

the star building material of the 21st century and how Malaysian architects can mirror the accomplishments of their European counterparts who have been successful in constructing high-rise buildings.

"Sensational timber structures have been developed in European as well as other countries such as Japan, Australia and China, and this is something which we can emulate. Malaysia should embrace the advancements that timber architecture is offering and re-look into the revision of relevant building regulations for a more innovative building sector," added Abdul Rahim.

MTC also held a mini exhibition in conjunction with the conference to showcase products such as doors, flooring, decking, panel products, moldings and glulam from ten local manufacturers to enable specifiers and users to know what is available in the market.