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## RM21.4b in export of timber, timber-based product last year: Mah

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Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong tossing 'Yee Sang' with members of the media at the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) Media Night 2018 on Jan 19, 2018. — Sunpix by Amirul Syafiq Mohd Din

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The country recorded RM21.4 billion in the export of timber and timber-based products between January and November last year.

Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong said this was a 6.8% increase as compared to the same period last year, and that local timber-based manufacturers could expect even higher profits in 2018.

"For the past ten years, the annual export earnings of this sector is approximately RM20 billion to RM22 billion.

"Manufacturers can expect higher returns this year as the economy within the Asean region strengthens, thanks to a healthy domestic demand and infrastructure spending," he said at the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) Media Night 2018, here, today.

To ensure sustainability and growth of the timber industry, Mah said the ministry was in the midst of formulating the National Oil Palm Trunk (OPT) development plan that would focus on the use of oil palm trunks as an alternative raw material supply.

He pointed that trunks would be a good source of raw material considering the high amount of oil palm estates that are available for harvesting annually - between 80,000 and 100,000 hectares.

"MTC is also setting up a Board Committee comprising relevant stakeholders to advise MTC's Board of Trustees on attaining sustainable raw material sources, among others," he said.

Mah added that MTC has also introduced its Financial Incentive for Purchase of Machinery Programme, which offers assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the industry to encourage them to adopt the latest technology in automation and mechanisation.

He said the council has already set aside RM3 million for the programme to be spread over a three-year period.