Malaysia projects RM22b in timber exports for 2016

MTC Task Force Retreat 2016

Euro Chairs: Staying excellent, going green

Cover Story

Malaysian Wood Awards – a premier competition launched
Dear Readers,

Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister, His Hon. Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong has his vision set on value adding Malaysia’s commodities including timber. He has identified timber manufacturing as the sub-sector to lead the momentum for the timber industry in this direction. With total furniture exports of RM9.1 billion in 2015, of which RM7.3 billion was wood-based, the furniture sub-sector is well positioned to contribute significantly to the timber industry’s overall contribution towards achieving the National Timber Industry Policy’s target of RM53 billion in export receipt by 2020. MTC applauds the Minister’s vision, a subject clearly spelt out during his first official visit to MTC in July 2016 (turn to page 2).

After months of careful planning and fine-tuning of contest details and judging criteria, the inaugural Malaysian Wood Awards was launched on 23 July. The first-of-its-kind in Malaysia, the competition is aimed at highlighting the versatility and beauty of Malaysian timbers in architecture. MTC in collaboration with the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) could not have chosen a more appropriate avenue for this purpose – the International Architecture, Interior Design & Building Exhibition or ARCHIDEX 2016, an annual event organised by PAM and which was attended by 35,000 visitors including architects from Malaysia, one of the main targets of the competition (see page 3 for more details of the competition).

In its continuing efforts to engage members of the timber fraternity in charting the development of the industry, MTC conducted its Annual Roadshow in Pahang, Penang, Perak and Selangor from 25-29 July and organised a Task Force Retreat on 18 August in Kuala Lumpur. The Roadshow was participated by a total of 124 participants who, besides providing valuable feedback to MTC, were also apprised on the latest market trends in various regions and countries. The Task Force Retreat was actively participated by 66 industry members and representatives from relevant government agencies as well as MTC. This large gathering of senior members of the industry, aimed at preparing a three-year Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, augurs well in moving the Malaysian timber industry forward (turn to pages 4 and 12).

Featured in this issue’s FOR THE LOVE OF WOOD is Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman, a traditional Malay house which was relocated from a small village in the northern state of Kedah to the compound of the Heritage of Malaysia Trust in Jalan Stoner right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. The house is more than a hundred years old with Malaysian timbers used in traditional ways for its structures and other applications like flooring, roofing, doors, windows and decorative carvings. These timber components are testaments to the enduring quality and beauty of timber and provide a window to the past where vernacular construction and craftsmanship were an art form (see pages 20-25).

Happy reading!

The Editor.
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Timber Malaysia

Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister, His Hon. Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong has projected that the value of exports from Malaysia’s timber sector is likely to hold up at RM22 billion this year as global demand remains stable.

The Minister was speaking to the media in conjunction with his first working visit to the Malaysian Timber Industry Board and Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) both of which are located in Menara PGRM, Cheras in Kuala Lumpur.

He added that, “So far, in the first five months of this year, we posted RM9.13 billion in timber exports, the bulk of which was contributed by wooden and rattan furniture.

“The timber, plywood and furniture-making sub-sectors have tremendous potential for growth. We want to press on with value adding our commodities from the current 40 per cent of exports to 60 per cent,” he said, adding that the ministry also wants to encourage more skills training in woodwork design and carpentry.

Malaysia is one of the world’s top tropical timber producers, of which the furniture sub-sector is its star performer, being among the world’s Top 10 producers. Under the National Timber Industry Policy, the Minister said the sector targets an export revenue of up to RM53 billion by 2020.

Accompanying the Minister on the visit on 25 July 2016 were his Deputy His Hon. Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur, the Ministry’s Secretary-General Datuk M. Nagarajan, Deputy Secretary-General (Commodities) Zurinah Pawanteh and Undersecretary of the Timber, Tobacco and Kenaf Industries Division Mad Zaidi Mohd. Karli.

In welcoming Datuk Seri Mah to MTC, the Council’s Chairman, Dato’ Sri Wee Jeck Seng expressed confidence that MTC will achieve greater heights under the Minister’s leadership, wisdom and guidance.

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Timber has been changing the design landscapes of the world for eons. Despite losing its prominence over a period of time due to the introduction of other building materials, timber never fell off the radar of builders, architects, engineers or developers.

Malaysia’s rich rainforest has been a source of high quality timber for centuries. Our sustainable forest management practices have further boosted our timbers in the eyes of major wood users all over the world.

In a bid to highlight the versatility and beauty of Malaysian timbers, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) introduced the Malaysian Wood Awards, a first-of-its-kind in the country in collaboration with the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM).

The Malaysian Wood Awards 2016 was launched by Datuk M. Nagarajan, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities on behalf of His Hon. Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities on 23 July 2016 in Kuala Lumpur.

“I am optimistic that this Wood Awards will further promote and encourage a wider use of Malaysian timbers in the built environment. I hope the competition becomes a platform that will develop a ‘design-with-wood’ culture,” said Datuk Seri Mah in a statement which was read by Datuk Nagarajan.

“There are many benefits of using timber in the built environment which those in the construction industry are still unaware of. The introduction of the Malaysian Wood Awards will help dispel many of the myths associated with timber while paying tribute to those who knew how to use it best,” said the Minister.

Also present at the launch ceremony was MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik who hoped that the competition would give rise to a new generation of timber users.

“The Malaysian Wood Awards 2016 is a premier competition that is set to reward designers of magnificent timber structures that stand majestically on Malaysian soil showcasing the brilliance of timber,” said Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim.

“While some of the world’s premium tropical resorts and plush private hideaways are made of Malaysian timbers, only a handful knows about timber’s versatility as a building material. It is time more Malaysians are made aware of timber’s true abilities and they will be in awe when they see it,” added Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim.

“Wood is known to be more resilient than steel without the coldness of touch associated with the latter. Engineered timber products are even stronger and wood is more fire-safe than other building materials.

“Timber beams are able to maintain their structural integrity during a fire due to wood’s slow charring property which gives people ample time to evacuate a building unlike steel or concrete as they buckle under high temperatures.

“The overall cost of building with timber is much the same but there is considerable savings in terms of construction time when timber is used,” said Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim.

The Malaysian Wood Awards is open to all who have completed their projects in Malaysia during or after 2006.

A total of RM150,000 in prizes is up for grabs.

An elite panel of judges comprising prominent foreign and local professionals from the architecture, engineering and timber industries will not only review the submissions but also visit the shortlisted projects, making this a rigorous competition.

The judging panel includes Datuk Dr. Ken Yeang, Jonas Lencer, Andrew Lawrence, Ar. (Dr.) Mohd Zulhemlee An, Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik and Dato’ Dr. Jalaluddin Harun.
The MTC Roadshow was held in four cities this year - Kuantan, Pahang; Seberang Jaya, Penang; Ipoh, Perak; and Klang, Selangor. The roadshow, which is an annual event for the Council, was held from 25 to 29 July 2016.

Led by MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik, the roadshow was scheduled to update industry partners on the latest market trends and to obtain feedback from the members on the programmes and activities which MTC plans on organising in 2017. Officers from the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) were also present to speak on the export assistance programme that is offered by the government.

The roadshow attracted 22 participants from 13 companies in Kuantan; 44 participants from 30 companies in Seberang Jaya; 10 participants from eight companies in Ipoh and 48 participants from 39 companies in Klang.

MTC’s directors and MATRADE’s officers gave a concise presentation on the timber market’s needs and expectations.

MTC Market Promotion Division Director Khairul Anwar gave power point presentations on “Highlights on Timber Exports & Market Promotion Activities 2016-2017” and “Gulf Countries Poised for Positive Construction Outlook” while MTC’s London Director Sheam Satkuru-Granzeilla spoke on “Developments, Opportunities and Challenges in Europe”.

MTC Guangzhou Director Tan Ting Wai highlighted the current market trends in China, Japan and South Korea, and MTC’s Industry Development Director Hamidah Abdullah spoke on enhancing the industry’s technology base and augmenting raw material supply.

The four MATRADE officers at the roadshow were Hasziah Mohd Yazid, Badrul Hisham Hilal, Muhamad Husni Ya and Mohd Noor Azhab Mohd Shazili.

Hasziah, MATRADE Eastern Region Office Director spoke on the export opportunities for building materials (wood-based products) in ASEAN while Badrul Hisham and Muhamad Husni, who are the directors of MATRADE’s Northern Region Office talked on tapping into opportunities in the international market and on financial assistances.

Mohd Noor Azhab, who is MATRADE’s Construction Related Services and Building Material Unit Senior Manager, also spoke on the export opportunities for wood-based products as building materials in ASEAN.

The MTC delegation also visited four factories during the roadshow.
Innovative designs are hard to miss and MTC’s creative display of various timber species at this year’s International Architecture, Interior Design & Building Exhibition 2016 or ARCHIDEX 2016 attracted the attention of many visitors at the fair.

MTC had constructed its 36 square metre promotional booth using seven types of timber, six of which were Malaysian timbers. The timbers, with different density, texture and colour, were cut into various sizes and suspended off the ceiling. The timber planks were screwed to metal hooks which were supported by wooden dowels, hence creating a “stalactite” effect to enable visitors to touch and feel the wood.

The six local species used were Balau, Kempas, Kembang Semangkok, Kapur, Bintangor and Jelutong. The sole non-Malaysian timber used was New Zealand Pine. Despite being a softwood, the New Zealand Pine was used as beams and for decking. Timbers with lower density can be strengthened using the technology for manufacturing glued laminated timber, also known as glulam, a structural engineered wood product comprising a number of layers of dimensional timber bonded together with durable, moisture-resistant structural adhesives.

Other added attractions at MTC’s booth were four huge wooden benches and a table where a beautiful tabletop was created using the six local timber species.

Showcasing the various aspects of timber for structural applications and promoting a wider use of timber amongst architects and key industry players are part of MTC’s objectives of being part of ARCHIDEX which also serves as a platform for MTC to raise awareness of its core functions and services.

This year’s ARCHIDEX, held from 20-23 July 2016 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, is the 16th edition of the annual event organised by the Malaysian Institute of Architects and C.I.S Network Sdn Bhd. The exhibition, spread across nine halls, had more than 1,200 booths comprising local and international exhibitors from 12 countries. The event drew about 35,000 visitors.

ARCHIDEX, which was officiated by the Deputy Minister of Works Her Hon. Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin on behalf of His Hon. Datuk Sri Fadillah Yusof, the Minister of Works, was also the venue for MTC’s launch of the inaugural Malaysian Wood Awards.

Datuk M.Nagarajan, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities, who launched the premier Wood Awards, was appreciative of the efforts made by MTC in designing the promotional booth.

MTC attracted more than 300 architects, builders, specifiers, interior designers and students to the booth over the four-day period. Following a visit at the booth, INTI International College in Subang, Selangor, invited MTC to give a talk on timber and its applications for INTI’s new batch of students who are specialising in Industrial Design.

MTC’s promotional booth with its artistic ceiling structure will be donated to Universiti Technologi MARA Shah Alam in Selangor as an educational showcase on the versatility of timber in construction and interior decoration purposes.
Moving forward with robotics

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) co-organised the “Robotics: An Investor’s Profit” seminar with ABB Malaysia Sdn Bhd at the latter’s factory in Bandar Sunway, Petaling Jaya. The technical seminar, which was attended by 54 industry members and affiliates, touched on issues pertaining to labour dependency and how robotics as well as automation can help alleviate this problem.

In his welcoming remarks, MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik said the industry needs to leverage on technological innovations that will help it enhance its performance and that automation and robotics are the way forward.

ABB Malaysia Regional Sales Manager Choong Hoong Teen gave a talk on how robotics would be ideal for the timber industry, especially in areas such as material handling, grading, tending, assembly, packing, painting, sanding and polishing.

He added that automation provides better quality control, reduces work-place accidents and above all relieves employees from heavy and repetitive work in dust-filled environments.

This was followed by presentations from Mohd Rasli Muda

Cross-border funding made easy

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) organised two finance-related talks on 5 October 2016 at Menara PGRM in Kuala Lumpur. The event, titled “MTC Talk On Cross-Cutting Issues: Export Credit Refinancing & Related Topics and Credit Rating On Your Buyers/Suppliers”, was attended by about 30 participants comprising industry partners.

EXIM Bank Malaysia Senior Manager Azrin Azizuddin, who tweaked his presentation title to “Funding Availability for Cross-Border Financing”, spoke on the facilities that EXIM Bank provides Malaysian businessmen. EXIM, which maintains its presence in 109 countries, offers banking, trade credit insurance and advisory services.

EXIM provides support to Malaysian exporters which Malaysian commercial banks are less able to lend on account of the banks’ lack of coverage in international operations for such cross-border risk. Its Export Credit Insurance is also sought-after as it covers against non-payment due to commercial or political risks.

Azrin also highlighted on the criteria of an applicant which includes having a reputable and experienced management team.

Dawn Lai, who spoke on the “Credit Rating On Your Buyers/Suppliers” emphasised on the need to be informed in order to reduce investment risks. Lai provided a checklist on evaluating a business which underlined the need to see whether a company has any winding-up petitions or law suits against it. Checking on an organisation’s paid-up capital, relationships with other businesses, profitability, credit rating and default probability were also good key assessment indicators.

Lai, the Chief Executive Officer of RAM Credit Info, said apart from public sources of information such as the Registrar of Companies, government agencies, newspapers and courts, private sources of information were also available. These include the Banker’s Report and Credit Reporting Agencies. Hiring an investigator to verify an organisation’s status is also recommended.
The Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) paid tribute to Datuk Dr. Freezailah Che Yeom, whose illustrious career as its founding Chairman spanning 17 years culminated in a farewell and appreciation dinner held on 27 July 2016 in Kuala Lumpur. The event was graced by His Hon. Datuk Datu Nasrun Datu Mansur, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, and well attended by members of Malaysia’s forestry and timber fraternity.

Datuk Dr. Freezailah was appointed as the Chairman of MTCC following its establishment in 1998 as an independent organisation tasked with developing and operating the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS).

A forester by training, Datuk Dr. Freezailah has been instrumental in inspiring a forest-loving society through his passion and involvement in championing the sustainable forestry agenda. His track record as a prominent thought leader in forestry spans beyond national borders to the global community.

This was demonstrated through his appointment as the founding Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) from 1987 to 1999. As its Executive Director, he provided leadership to develop the ITTO into a respected international organisation for promoting the conservation, and sustainable management and utilisation of the world’s tropical forests.

Upon retiring from the ITTO, he pursued his passion for sustainable forest management through his involvement in MTCC. It was no surprise that Malaysia quickly became one of the region’s early adopters and promoters of sustainable forestry practices through the implementation of the MTCS.

Said Datuk Dr. Freezailah: “I have enjoyed a fulfilling career in a long journey as a forester serving the Forestry Department, ITTO and the MTCC over a period which spans more than five decades. I must thank my colleagues, stakeholders and all the remarkable people who have done their utmost so that our incomparable biodiversity-rich forests are sustainably managed for present and future generations. With its exemplary track record, I am confident that MTCC will continue to contribute to Malaysia’s sustainable forestry agenda.”

Datuk Dr. Freezailah earned a BSc (Forestry) degree with First Class Honours and a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. He is succeeded by Datuk Himmat Singh, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

Commended on his predecessor, Datuk Himmat said: “Datuk Dr. Freezailah’s focused approach in championing SFM is truly inspiring. His tireless efforts have been crucial in advancing Malaysia’s sustainability initiatives in the fields of forestry and environment. Words cannot express our immense gratitude to him. His stellar legacy and exemplary passion is one that will continue to inspire the next generation of foresters.”

Datuk Himmat’s appointment marks another milestone for the MTCC as it continues to advance and spearhead the sustainable forest management agenda in Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region.

“Malaysia’s forest resources are a national treasure that requires responsible management if we want our future generations to continue enjoying its offerings. MTCC plays a very important role in encouraging more forest managers and timber industry players to implement sustainable forestry through a timber certification scheme. I look forward to being a part of this initiative,” said Datuk Himmat.
Further research into peatland essential, says Sarawak CM

Addressing the opening of the 15th International Peat Congress (IPC) in Kuching, Sarawak on 15 August 2016, The Right Hon. Chief Minister of Sarawak, Tan Sri Adenan Satem called for sustainable development and further research into better peatland management.

“The challenge we face today is that tropical peatland, as compared to other soil types, is still quite an understudied soil,” said Tan Sri Adenan, adding that this had sparked the wrong conclusion that the development of plantations on peatland soil was not recommended.

He criticised a negative campaign around the development of peatland into agricultural areas, saying the campaign had political motives to prevent the expansion of palm oil plantations that competed with other plantations like sunflower oil and soya bean oil plantations, mostly developed in European countries and the US.

According to Tan Sri Adenan, oil palm yield on peatland can be doubled by undertaking mechanical soil compaction. This is one of the findings from scientific research carried out by the Sarawak-based Tropical Peat Research Laboratory, he said, adding that this changed the economics of agriculture on peatland.

“This mechanical compaction has also brought the unintended benefit of reducing susceptibility of peat fire outbreaks,” he added.

Adenan said the laboratory had established via scientific research that carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂) from peatland with oil palm plantations were half those claimed by some uninformed parties, and that CO₂ emissions from these plantations were actually lower than those from undisturbed peatland or forests.

He said that these vital scientific facts combined with proper enforcement and good governance had enabled the Sarawak government to formulate informed and sound policies pertaining to agriculture on peatland.

The laboratory, which was set up under the Chief Minister’s Department in 2008, aims to develop scientific, technical knowledge and clear understanding on the sustainability of oil palm cultivation on tropical peat.

According to Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister, His Hon. Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, the laboratory was allocated RM39.1 million from 2008 to 2015 to undertake research activities in collaboration with the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) towards developing best practices and other measures to ensure the suitability of oil palm development on peatland.

Mah, in his speech at the ceremony, said about 27.5% of the country’s 2.43 million ha of peatland had been cultivated with oil palm.

He noted that planting oil palm on peatland was subjected to much scrutiny from environmental organisations, as well as ethical consumer advocacy groups for various reasons.

These, he pointed out, include allegations of oil palm development contributing towards the degradation of peatland, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

“In order to address these issues, the Government will continue to ensure that the industry complies to the existing rules and regulations, including good agriculture practices and adopting a sustainable approach in development.”

Mah said MPOB had developed guidelines for the “Development of a standard operating procedure for oil palm cultivation on peat” as a guide on oil palm cultivation on peatland.
The congress with the theme “Peatlands in Harmony – Agriculture, Industry & Nature” was successfully held from 15 to 19 August. It was organised by Malaysian Peat Society (MPS) in partnership with the International Peatland Society (IPS). This was the first time that this congress in its 60 years history was being hosted in Asia. The next Congress will be held in Estonia.

More than 1,000 participants from all parts of the world gathered to share their ideas, experience and expertise. The objectives of the congress were to provide an ideal platform for networking development, knowledge sharing and disseminate scientific results and experience particularly to peat and peatlands in the tropics. It was also to highlight the closely intertwined relationship of the environment, industry and socio-economic factors in relation to peat.

In total, 335 papers comprising one plenary paper, 10 keynote papers, 186 oral papers and 138 poster papers were presented. The congress also had six symposiums and six Special Sessions to discuss on the following, amongst others: Inventory, biodiversity, conservation and functions of peatlands; Peatlands and Ecosystem Management; Peatland After-use and Restoration, Peatland Technology and Agro-technology; and Tropical Peatland Biodiversity and Conservation in Borneo and Sumatra.

Participants also took part in a one-day excursion to smallholder farms, Semenggoh Nature Reserve and Bako National Park.

The Kelantan Forestry Department is targeting a total of 1.1 million trees to be successfully planted this year. The tree-planting project is being implemented through the provisions of the 11th Malaysia Plan.

About 600,000 trees of various species have been planted by the Kelantan Forestry Department since June this year as part of the restoration works in 2014 flood-hit areas. Its Deputy Director, Nik Mohd Hasanuddin Hussin, said the process has been implemented in stages and was now expanding into areas around the Lebir River in Gua Musang.

“Recently, we managed to plant trees along a 20km stretch in some declining areas around Lebir River. This replanting process will be continued in stages up to the Sungai Kelantan,” he recently said, adding that the department is targeting a total of 1.1 million trees to be successfully planted this year based on the current development of the project.

The tree-planting project is being implemented through the provisions of the 11th Malaysia Plan amounting to RM1.7 million under the restoration programme for the rehabilitation of declining areas along the Kelantan rivers.

Nik Mohd Hasanuddin said the department also received advice from the Orang Asli (indigenous people) on the species of trees suitable to be planted on the riverbanks, besides obtaining the seeds from the community. He added that the selection of seedlings was important to comply with the location so that it could withstand the onslaught of natural disasters such as floods.
The Faculty of Forestry, University Putra Malaysia (UPM) recently organised its inaugural International Conference of Sustainable Forest Development in View of Climate Change (SFDCC) 2016. Held on 8-11 August 2016 in Bangi, Selangor, the conference saw keynote and paper presentations, talks, poster presentations and exhibitions by participating agencies.

It was officiated by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, His Hon. Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar and attended by more than 200 participants from various fields related to forestry from 17 countries.

Speaking at the event, Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi said, “Eighteen percent of Malaysia will be inundated by the year 2100 if the country does not follow the guidelines set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). He said the percentage specifically involved the coastal and low-lying areas due to the increase in the sea level caused by the worldwide melting of ice due to the changing climate.

He added that Malaysia was among the most advanced nations in tackling problems associated with forest development and many countries wanted to learn and obtain information for forest development in their respective countries.

Chairman of SFDCC 2016, Assoc. Prof Dr. Seca Gandaseca, said the conference would benefit participants in terms of research development, networking establishment and disseminating scientific knowledge especially on forest development in view of climate change.

The conference was organised in collaboration with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Forest Research Institute Malaysia, Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia, Institute for Tropical Forestry and Forest Products, Asia-Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, and was sponsored by the Malaysian Timber Council and Sarawak Timber Association.

It was aimed at providing information that will contribute significantly towards seeking and addressing challenges and finding solutions related to sustainable forest management all over the world. The primary goal was to promote scientific information interchange between researchers in the fields of forestry and climate change.

“Eighteen percent of Malaysia will be inundated if the country does not follow the guidelines set by the UNFCCC.”

- His Hon. Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar

MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik (left) presenting a copy of MTC’s coffeetable book “ReThink: A New Paradigm for Malaysian Timber” to Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi when he visited MTC’s information booth set up in conjunction with the conference.
Malaysia practises SFM, calls for green premium

Speaking at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Rainforest Summit 2016, Malaysia’s Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, His Hon. Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said that Malaysia is committed to preserving its natural resources and in implementing sustainable forest management (SFM), but it hopes that there would be aid for tropical countries and a green premium for timber products from sustainably managed forest.

“Malaysia hopes there will be assistance to tropical countries as stated in Item 15.5 of the Sustainable Development Goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” he said at the Summit, which was held in Brunei Darussalam on 3-5 August 2016.

Item 15.5 of the Agenda touches on mobilising significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance SFM and to provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation.

Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi stressed that retaining land as forests has high opportunity cost, and there is always pressure from interested parties to convert forests to other land uses to generate long term economic activities. For this reason, Malaysia regards the international support for forests as vital and has implemented REDD+ to gain access to payments for result based actions.

REDD+ stands for efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

The minister also raised another important issue — the need for a green premium on timber products from SFM.

“The provision of a green premium and harmonisation of consumer procurement policies by importing countries can be one of the incentives to promote and encourage SFM. Without the support of the international forest community and positive market response, the efforts of developing countries will be limited,” he said.

Hosted by the Bruneian government with the support of the Australian government and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), this year’s summit builds on the inaugural summit held in Sydney in November 2014, which resulted in the formation of the Asia-Pacific Rainforest Partnership.

The summit focuses on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the Paris Climate Change Agreement, which aims to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including emission reductions from the forest sector.

Brunei’s Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, His Hon. Dato Seri Setia Awang Ali Apong in his keynote address said: “During our inaugural summit in Sydney, we discussed on the practical and technical aspects of monitoring forests, combating illegal logging, protecting biodiversity, promoting community and indigenous people participation in forest management, and eliminating deforestation from the global supply chain.

“In this summit, we will be stepping ahead and focusing our discussions on sustainable financing, opportunities and partnerships, sustainable landscape management, policy frameworks and green economies.”

The Minister said that the 2015 Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) reported that the forests of the Asia-Pacific region have increased by five million hectares since 2010 and 20 million hectares since 2000.

With a total forest area of 723 million hectares, the Asia-Pacific forests represent 18 per cent of total global forests area, and these positive developments can be attributed to the increase in protected areas, forest plantations and improving quality of forest management in the region, he said.

“However, despite the increase in the region’s forest, FRA 2015 still noted that deforestation and forest degradation remain important challenges in many countries,” Dato Seri Setia Awang Ali said, adding that the summit aimed to identify practical actions to reduce forest loss while at the same time balance development aspirations of the Asia-Pacific nations.

The summit brought together stakeholders from government, business, civil society and the research community to catalyze practical action on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and achieving sustainable development in the region.

“The provision of a green premium and harmonisation of consumer procurement policies by importing countries can be one of the incentives to promote and encourage SFM.”

- His Hon. Datuk Sri Dr. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar

MTC CEO, Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik, in his welcoming remarks said, “All these years, MTC have been drawing up our marketing programmes and activities in consultation with the industry and we will continue to do so through the regular annual dialogue and roadshows.

“With the said Marketing Strategy and Action Plan developed by the Task Force Groups, we believe it would help to further strengthen our marketing programme and activities for the Malaysian timber industry. It is also our hope that activities to be undertaken by Task Force Groups should complement the functions of MTC and its Regional Offices.”

A total of 66 participants from the six national timber-based associations, relevant government agencies and MTC participated in the retreat.

The preparation of the Marketing Strategy and Action Plan was coordinated and consolidated by Tham Sing Khow, the Task Force Coordinator appointed by the Malaysian Timber Industry Forum Association (MTIFA) set up by the six associations.

The total export target set by Task Force Groups is projected to be RM12.5 billion by 2019. The main target markets to be focused on for the three-year period include China and other far eastern countries, India and the Indian Sub-Continent, ASEAN and countries in North and South America, Western Europe, Australia, Turkey and West Asia.

In closing the retreat, Goh Chee Yew, Chairman of the MTC Market Advisory Committee (MAC), which formulates the strategic direction for the promotion and growth of the industry, said the MAC will deliberate on the proposals by the various Task Forces and refine its strategies for the industry to achieve its projected export target.
The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) has complimented the Malaysian furniture manufacturers who have managed to meet the sales target that was set amidst a sluggish global economy.

MTC, which maintains an annual presence at the China International Furniture Expo or Furniture China, set a sales target of RM40 million for the 18 Malaysian furniture manufacturers who exhibited at what is deemed as the third largest furniture fair in the world.

The manufacturers raked in confirmed and potential sales of RM40.03 million at the trade fair which was held at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre in Pudong, Shanghai, China, from 8 to 11 September 2016.

“We are not immune to the current economic climate but staying focused on market trends and meeting its needs have always been our goal,” said MTC CEO Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Nik. Last year, MTC’s Malaysia Pavilion recorded potential and confirmed sales worth RM36.05 million.

He added that MTC had intensified its publicity efforts in Shanghai to draw more visitors to MTC’s Pavilion at the expo to help the manufacturers where six of the 18 were exhibiting for the first time with MTC. The first-timers secured 39% of the sales or RM15.60 million.

Since last year, MTC began organising group participations to enable Malaysian furniture manufacturers to collectively display their products at Furniture China.

Malaysia and China have always enjoyed healthy trade ties and the pledge of achieving US$160 billion in bilateral trade by 2017 has further magnified efforts from the business sectors of both nations.

China has been in the top 10 of the major export market for Malaysia in the last five years. In 2015, Malaysia’s total export of timber and timber products, including furniture to China was RM1.9 billion or 3.7% of the export pie.

**Germany**

**Spoga+Gafa**

Spoga+Gafa - Europe’s main trade fair for the outdoor/garden industry - was held from 4 to 6 September 2016 at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre in Cologne, Germany. In total, 2,032 companies from 57 countries selected Spoga+Gafa as the platform for the presentation of their new products, occupying 225,000 square metres of floor space.

MTC once again shared a stand with the Malaysian Timber Certification Council at the fair where four Malaysian companies exhibited their products.

In 2015, sales of garden products were up in Germany. The year started well but the second quarter saw a marked reduction. However, sales picked up again in the second half of the year and the German garden industry association reported year-end growth of 1.5% or €18.3 billion, the best record since 2012.

This year, however, the flow of visitors to the stand was not as high as last year. This may be due to the summer weather this year which has not been very good and importers did not see a need to restock as there was low demand.
Timber is the oldest building material known to man after stone. It is a remarkably durable material which is also aesthetically pleasing. However, being an organic resource, wood can deteriorate due to decay, insect attack or when exposed to harsh weather conditions over a period of time.

To protect and ensure its service life, timber must be maintained and rehabilitated to prevent further damage.

Speaking on this subject was MTC’s guest speaker Dr Con Adam, Principal Honorary Research Fellow from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Dr Adam shared his views during his presentation entitled “Post-Construction Management for Timber Structures” at MTC’s Timber Talk.

An experienced timber engineer and also an Inspectorate Director of the Glued Laminated Timber Association of Australia (GLTAA), Dr. Adam’s presentation focused on timber bridges rather than timber structures as they are more severely exposed to deterioration.

He explained that caring for these structures can either be done through routine or periodic maintenance as well as when specific work is required.

About 140 industry members, representatives from relevant agencies and students attended the Timber Talk held on 9 September 2016 in Kuala Lumpur.

MTC teams up with art gallery to showcase timber’s versatility

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) collaborated with Shalini Ganendra Fine Art’s (SGFA) in its project PavilionNOW 2016. The project, with its theme “Shadow Garden”, was a showcase of timber’s versatility as a building material through the fine arts.

The PavilionNOW project requires architects to design and construct structures that can be placed within the gallery’s residential space and the project was completed within six months.

The opening ceremony of the Shadow Garden, PavilionNOW 2016 was held on 15 September 2016, at the Shalini Ganendra Fine Art @ Gallery Residence. Present at the opening ceremony was MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik, gallery owner Datin Shalini Ganendra, MTC Industry Development Director Hamidah Abdullah and MTC Corporate Communications Director Alexis Chang.

MTC sponsored the project by providing the timbers - Merbau and Red Balau - as well as the timber coating for the structure that was designed by architect Eleena Jamil.

The Shadow Garden pavilion is a temporary installation, which uses a system of pressed galvanised steel shutters connected to planter boxes by ropes, and pulleys are hung from a timber structure. It incorporates a kitchen garden where the 12 hanging planter boxes are planted with various herbs, or “ulam”, used in traditional Malay cooking.

The installation explores old building methods and the use of local materials - the main structure uses locally sourced wood in the form of rectangular timber sections that are mainly joined together using traditional woodworking methods called ‘tanggam’.

Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim said MTC was pleased to be part of the project and commended SGFA for nurturing the artistic spirit through the use of timber. In his opening remarks, he also spoke about the Council’s role as a marketing arm and its efforts in promoting the use of Malaysian timbers.

The PavilionNOW 2016, which is the second edition of SGFA’s three-year programme, had the involvement of students from Taylor’s University School of Architecture and Design.
India

Marketing Mission

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) mounted a marketing mission to Chennai and Bengaluru, India, from 21 to 27 August 2016. MTC CEO Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim Nik led a delegation comprising 18 Malaysian timber product exporters. Fourteen of the 18 companies secured RM6.53 million in confirmed and potential sales. Eight of these 14 companies were first-time participants who secured 46.05% or RM3 million in sales.

MTC organises marketing missions such as this from time to time to help Malaysian timber-based manufacturers to strengthen their presence and explore new business opportunities.

India was Malaysia’s third largest timber trading partner after Japan and the United States in 2015. The value of major timber and timber products imported by India from Malaysia amounted to RM1.9 billion, an increase of 6.3% compared with 2014.

“India holds huge promise as it is ranked as one of the top three most attractive investment destinations in the world. Its growing middle class and demand for timber as well as timber-based products have prompted MTC to open a regional office in India next year,” said Datuk Dr. Abdul Rahim.

Seminars as well as B2B sessions were held in Chennai and Bengaluru for the manufacturers. There was also a presentation by MTC’s Industry Development Division Director Hamidah Abdullah in both cities. The presentation entitled “Malaysian Timbers – Beyond Your Imaginations” covered topics on the types of Malaysian timber, their characteristics, applications and strength.

The B2B meeting in Chennai attracted 41 buyers from 37 countries while 106 buyers from 80 companies attended the B2B sessions in Bengaluru. Buyers from Bengaluru came from various parts of India such as Kerala, Gujarat, New Dehl, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The presence of these buyers indicates how keen they are to see what Malaysia has to offer.

Apart from the seminars and B2B sessions, the delegation also visited sawmills and timber factories in the two cities to see first-hand the manufacturing technology and the business practices of India’s timber manufacturers.

Iran

Iran Confair 2016

The 16th International Exhibition of Building & Construction Industry (Iran Confair) was held from 12 to 15 August 2016 at the International Permanent Fair Ground in Teheran. The trade fair attracted exhibitors from countries such as China, Turkey, South Korea, Germany, Spain, France and Greece.

The exhibitors showcased a comprehensive range of products, services and modern technologies to support the infrastructure and construction growth of Iran. The fair provides a platform for building material companies to cater to the needs of the local construction industry.

This year, however, the number of exhibitors was down to 907 compared with last year’s 1,245.
It all began in 1976 when a determined Lew Fatt Sin started a small business under the name Fatt Sin Cushion. Back then, he manufactured sofas and cushions with only three employees on board.

Eleven years later, Euro Chairs was founded and Lew had turned the company into a leading manufacturer of ergonomic chairs and office furniture products. Today, Euro Chairs operates with 700 employees and has businesses across five continents with exports to the US, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Australia and Southeast Asia.

Before 1995, Euro Chairs focused mainly on office chairs. They later began to look for more opportunities and ventured into producing workstations, starting with partitions. To date, the company has been offering what they term as “Total Office Solutions” to the market which include ergonomic office furniture, storages, panels and office furniture accessories.

Eventhough metal is its main component,
Eventhough metal is its main component, Euro Chairs also uses 30 to 40 per cent of wood in its manufacture of office furniture components, which include tabletops, pedestals and panels through the use of plywood and chipboards. The company has invested in machineries that use technology from Germany to ensure that the quality of its office furniture is maintained.

Euro Chairs has also successfully penetrated into the commercial sector in Malaysia where its furniture is used in Carcosa Seri Negara, Mandarin Oriental, Istana Hotel, Pernas Sogo and Tangs Departmental Store, among others.

Just like any business venture, Euro Chairs had its bout of challenges but it has persevered and continues to forge forward in strengthening its market presence.

Over the years, Euro Chairs has won the Best Brands Award from 2006 to 2009 under the BrandLaureate Awards; Entrepreneur of The Year under Furniture Leadership Award; Outstanding SMEs Winner under the Golden Bull Award; and Furniture Excellence Award at the Malaysian International Furniture Fair, to name a few.

Euro Chairs further marked its excellence when it became a public listed company on the Second Board of Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad.

It is also the only company in the country to be certified with the Green Guard Certification, an international-based certification system, which stipulates that a product has met some of the world’s most rigorous and comprehensive standards for low emissions of volatile organic compounds into indoor air.

In other words, Euro Chairs’s products are environmentally friendly, which is in line with the manufacturers’ goal of providing safe and quality products.

Being the pioneer in the office furniture business is no easy task but Euro Chairs is more than determined to remain at the top of their game. The company has proven thus far that no challenge is too great.

Euro Chairs uses 30 to 40 per cent of wood in its manufacture of office furniture components.

Euro Chairs’s products are environmentally friendly, which is in line with the manufacturers’ goal of providing safe and quality products.
THE MALAYSIAN WOOD AWARDS

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) supports excellence in the built environment using the world’s only naturally renewable building material – Wood.

In a bid to highlight the versatility and beauty of timbers, the Malaysian Wood Awards sets to crown the best and most innovative uses of timber in the country. With a total prize money of RM150,000 awaiting winners, the Wood Awards aims to recognize, encourage and promote brilliant craftsmanship and installation using timber in the built form.

Being the first-of-its-kind in the country, awards will be given to outstanding public, commercial and private projects.

Participants must only submit projects that have been completed within the last 10 years where the primary building material is timber.

Submit your entries now and stand a chance to win this prestigious award!

The closing date is 31 December 2016.

For details on the Malaysian Wood Awards,

visit www.mtc.com.my/mwa
The Sheffield Winter Garden is one of the largest temperate glasshouses to be built in the UK during the last century. Designed by Pringle Richards Sharratt Architects, it provides visitors with a unique experience in the heart of the city with its more than 2,500 plants from around the world creating a superb display.

The building itself is 70m long and 22m high, which is large enough to house 5,000 domestic greenhouses. Its frame is formed from 21 parabolic arches of glued laminated or Glulam timber of untreated larch, derived from sustainable forests and which are gradually weathering to a silvery grey. Slender timber purlins and glazing bars create a fine framework between the arches to hold over 2,000sqm of glass.

The primary arches are supported at ground level on sculptural steel cradles, while the intermediate arches finish at wall height and sit on elegant wooden raking struts. From the arches at each end, which lean outward to create canopies over the street entrances, they step up to the 22m high central section. This will allow the taller species of trees, including Norfolk Island pine and eucalyptus, to reach an impressive maturity, creating a luxuriant canopy above the paving and planting below.

Clear and legible with forms and materials that are natural and familiar, the Winter Garden is spectacular and awesome providing a memorable experience for all visitors – young and old. It was formally opened by Her Majesty the Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh on 22 May 2003.

The Winter Garden is the second phase of the Heart of the City project, following the Millennium Galleries. In November 2007, Sheffield’s Peace and Winter Gardens beat London’s South Bank to gain the Royal Institute of British Architects’ Academy of Urbanism “Great Place” Award, as an outstanding example of how cities can be improved, to make urban spaces as attractive and accessible as possible.
Old cradle of love

Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman has been carefully relocated and restored so that the past is never forgotten.
Standing in the middle of the kitchen and looking up at the roof leaves a sense of admiration as you ponder on the vastness of ancient wisdom.

“They didn’t have exhaust hoods back in the old days, so the roof was designed in a manner to allow heat from the kitchen to escape through the openings in the roof which don’t wet the kitchen or the dining area when it rains,” said Heritage of Malaysia Trust (HMT) librarian Ida Laila.

The roof in the dining area was slightly elevated which created an aperture that enables hot air to escape easily. The entire house has many such openings and the many carved wall ventilation panels not only act as decorative pieces but also help to keep the house cool.

Situated in one of the ritziest parts of the capital city, the house, which is close to 100 years old, in No 2, Jalan Stonor in Kuala Lumpur, is undaunted by the swanky buildings surrounding it.

Known as Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman, the old wooden abode was named after its first owner Abu Seman who was the village headman back in the 1900s in Bandar Baharu, Kedah. It is believed that Abu Seman built the house in the mid-1920s and later affixed the main section of the house known as “Rumah Ibu” which he got from another village.

In Malaysia, houses of old had very early on incorporated the pre-fabricated technology where pre-cut holes and grooves are used to fit the timbers together and these homes
Ceremonies such as weddings are held in the living area.
despite their sturdiness can be relocated and reassembled at anytime.

When Abu Seman died, his son Ibrahim not only took over his father’s post as village headman but also inherited the family home. However, when Ibrahim died, the house was left vacant after his daughters got married and shortly after abandoned as Ibrahim had no sons.

In 1995, Abu Seman’s descendants decided to sell the old house to HMT which was amazed by the house’s intricate design and architecture though it was in a state of disrepair.

Following that was a remarkable salvation and restoration exercise that saw the old house being relocated from Kedah to Kuala Lumpur and placed within HMT’s compound.

The dilapidated structure suffered mainly from termite infestation and decay. Much of the beams, roof trusses, purlins and roof tiles had to be replaced. The house, which was made of Chengal, Balau and Meranti was substituted with hardy timbers as well.

Some of the floorboards and floor joist were replaced with Medang while Chengal was used for the roof trusses and columns. The weatherboards were made of Red Meranti and Durian was used for the ceiling board and lattices.

The house is as good as new, thanks to the restoration efforts which have not been entirely plain sailing though, not by any stretch of the imagination. Experts from the Forest Research Institute Malaysia, construction industry, consultants and university professors had to be enlisted to identify how the new work could augment the old and preserve some of the original elements.
A year-and-a-half later, the repair work was completed and the restoration team showed that refurbishment exercises of old structures warrant the need to understand and respect those who had lived in different eras.

In dismantling the Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman, architects discovered a rare 1916 Straits Settlement coin under the house’s main column. The coin was returned to its original position during the reconstruction in 1996 and a 1996 one ringgit Malaysian coin was also placed there together with it.

Restoring the old house and placing it in the heart of the city makes it a nice tourist attraction as people like experiencing the “spirit” of the place. For those who have lived in such houses in the past, stepping into Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman can tug into the heartstrings and pop up memories that have been nesting quietly in the deep recesses of the mind.

There is a sense of warmth in the old house which is surrounded by crop-bearing and high-branched trees that not only keep the place cool but also provide shade for those who go on a walkabout in its compound. The house is also built on stilts which allow a free flow of air underneath.

And there’s the Malaysian timber. Its sturdiness gives a sense of security. Its warmth is like a loving embrace. You cannot see the inherent beauty of the wood grains as old engine oil used to preserve the wood have darken the timbers but being in the wooden house is like a lullaby that cradles the senses.

Many residential and commercial structures enhanced by the use of Malaysian timber are featured in MTC’s book “ReThink: A New Paradigm for Malaysian Timber”. Co-published with MPH and available at MPH and leading bookstores in Malaysia and Singapore, the book showcases breathtaking projects in Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius and the Maldives.

Please email Andrew Kong (andrew@mtc.com.my) or Mohd. Azmi Sarman (azmi@mtc.com.my) if you wish to purchase a copy.
Rewilding threatened aquatic species in Tasik Chini

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) botany team who started the rewilding of a threatened aquatic carnivorous species, *Utricularia punctata*, in Tasik Chini in 2014, continues to see through the restoration of the species there with the support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE).

*Utricularia punctata* is a native bladderwort found only in Tasik Bera, Tasik Chini and Sungai Kota Tinggi. However, the species could not be found at the latter two sites during field searches in 2009.

Tasik Bera and Tasik Chini are the only two large freshwater lakes in Peninsular Malaysia harbouring a number of rare species. *Utricularia punctata* is a sensitive indicator species, hence was the first to disappear when the habitat experienced slight environmental changes.

Between 2014 and 2015, trial plantings were carried out in Tasik Chini using plant stocks from Tasik Bera. Two small populations were re-established at sites not affected by soil erosion runoffs and one of the sites survived an extreme year-end flood in 2014. A larger scale rewilding was then carried out, including the establishment of demonstration plots where the governing authorities and the public can get an up-close view of this restored species.

Visual education tools interpreting the scientific findings are being designed and will be made available freely to the local communities, including a board game dubbed, “The Chini Dragon vs. *Utricularia punctata*” in the style of the popular snake-and-ladder children’s game.

The team hopes to raise awareness amongst various stakeholders to ensure the long-term protection of this species in particular and its unique habitat in general.

7-Eleven Malaysia, the country’s largest standalone convenience store operator is working with Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) on a climate change education and action programme.

Titled, “You Pledge, We Plant”, this CSR programme is run exclusively on Facebook whereby the public is called upon to pledge to the cause and, at the end of campaign, a tree will be planted for every 10 pledges received.

The campaign aims at educating the public via daily posts on the impact of climate change and will culminate in tree planting sessions nationwide by volunteers of 7-Eleven Malaysia and its partner, MNS.

7-Eleven Malaysia Marketing General Manager Ronan Lee said: “Our climate change initiative educates the public about the effects and ways to combat it, thus benefiting our environment and society when more trees are planted.”

MNS President Henry Goh said: “Our ecosystems are threatened by climate change and more than 35% of the world’s mangroves, the front line against climate change, are already gone. Thus, through this engagement with 7-Eleven Malaysia, we hope that this campaign will educate more people to be concerned with the effects and be aware of what can be done to reduce our own individual carbon footprint.”

University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Mitsubishi Corporation organised their 25th Silver Jubilee UPM-Mitsubishi Corporation tree planting ceremony at UPM Serdang recently, which saw the planting of 5,000 tree samplings.

Chairperson of Landskap Malaysia & Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre, Tun Jeanne Abdullah said UPM’s initiative in holding the programme was in line with the country’s climatic requirements for the planting of more trees to reduce heat and preserve the environment.

“It is my ardent hope that through this programme, we can assist in safeguarding the ecological functions of tropical forests”, she said when launching the occasion.

Also present were Prof. Datin Paduka Dr. Aini Ideris (Vice Chancellor, UPM) and Daisuke Tsurumi (Deputy General Manager, CSR & Environmental Affairs Department Mitsubishi Corporation Tokyo) and General Manager of Mitsubishi Corporation Kuala Lumpur, Kenji Ohta.

About 400 volunteers from Mitsubishi Corporation and UPM lecturers and students, staff from Biodiversity International, Landscape Malaysia, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia, NGOs and postgraduate students took part in the programme by planting the trees around UPM’s Forestry Arboretum.
The Pulau Pinang National Park, or Taman Negara Pulau Pinang, is located in the northwest corner of Penang Island. The park is a discreet nature reserve straddling 1,266 hectares of coastal hill dipterocarps, mangroves, beaches and rocky shores.

Many species of flora and fauna including rare and endangered ones can be found in the park, which is barely 45 minutes from the city centre of George Town. With its rainforest and beaches, the nature park is a great place for jungle trekking, camping, fishing, wildlife and bird spotting, or just relaxing on one of its beautiful beaches.

There are two main hiking trails through the forest and they are often steep, wet and tricky with lots of roots, tree trunks and, sometimes, rocks to climb over. One route runs along the coastline to Monkey Beach, locally known as Teluk Duyung, then winds up a steep climb to an elevation of 227m to Muka Head Lighthouse. It is by far the most popular stretch of sand in the park.

The other route goes over the headland to Kerachut Beach, or Pantai Kerachut, where a rare meromictic lake (a lake of layers where sea and fresh water do not mix) and the Penang Turtle Sanctuary are located. Green Sea Turtles come up on the beaches here to lay their eggs from April and August, and Olive Ridley Turtles, between September and February. There is a small hatchery area where baby turtles can be viewed. The track then leads off to Teluk Kampi, the most secluded of all the beaches on the island.

Another main attraction in the park is a 250m canopy walkway set 15m above the ground that allows a view of the treetops. The walkway is located just over 1km from the main entrance and is open daily from 10am to 4pm. However, the walkway might be closed after a heavy rain.

There are ample avenues for nature lovers to observe and photograph birds, turtles and other wildlife in their natural habitat. Visitors will have a chance to experience different habitats ranging from sandy and rocky beaches to mudflats, mangroves, the meromictic lake and tropical rainforest.
Location
The main entrance is on the northwestern tip of Pulau Pinang, a short distance past the town of Teluk Bahang.

Getting there
Those without own transport can either go by hired cars, taxis or catch the bus to the National Park. Bus 101 runs from the jetty in George Town every 10-15 minutes. Get off at the last stop. The trip takes around one hour, depending on traffic.

Opening hours
The Penang National Park is open daily from 8am to 5pm. These are the opening hours of the park registration office, where visitors have to register to get their permit, although the park itself is not closed off by any gates.

Entrance fees
Entrance to the park is free. Visitors wishing to use the canopy walk will have to buy their tickets at the park registration office. The ticket costs are RM5 for adults and RM3 for children.

Accommodation
As the park is so near to the city, there are no facilities for accommodation in the park. Only camping is allowed for participants of organised and structured programmes on nature study and conservation education. There are plenty of free camp grounds set up around the reserve.

Further Information
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