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Timber sector continues to grow during pandemic

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian timber industry continued to perform well despite the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated economic fallout, with exports recording a growth of 3.1% to RM22.70bil in 2021 from RM22.02bil in the previous year, *Bernama* reported.

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) said plywood was ranked top in terms of export value which together with wooden furniture, sawn timber and builders joinery and carpentry contributed more than half of the total exports, according to the national news agency.

"Demand for Malaysian timber-based products especially furniture grew in early 2020 as many people around the world began working from home, leading to a rise in home construction, repairs, and remodeling.

"There was a surge in demand for

Malaysian plywood in Japan and the United States in 2021," chairman Norrida Yusoff said in a statement.

The liquidation of a top plywood manufacturer in Japan led to an increase in demand, she said.

She also said that Malaysia's export of wooden furniture to the US, which is the largest export market, remained moderate.

Norrida said, nevertheless, the local timber industry is not entirely out of the woods as there were still some laggards in terms of rising sea freight charges, availability of containers, manpower shortages, and lack of raw materials.

"MTC has introduced many programmes since 2020 to help the industry overcome the more pressing challenges especially by providing incentives, which also include catering to technological advancements that help increase the use of resources efficiently in all

aspects apart from defraying sea freight charges," she added.

Meanwhile, chief executive officer Muhtar Suhaili said for 2022, the council's seven Must-Wins initiative will focus on reviving businesses with several new programmes for Oil Palm Trunk products, product design collaboration with the Forest Research Institute Malaysia, and the establishment of the environmental, social and governance guidelines for the timber industry.

He added that the MTC Roadmap, which encompasses a five-year plan from 2019 to 2023, encapsulates its strategy to overcome the pandemic-related challenges while ensuring the sustainability and viability of the Malaysian timber industry.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* also reported that economic growth in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or Apec region was expected to moderate to 4.2% this year.