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JEMPOL: Malaysia exported RM22.5 billion worth of wood-based products last year, Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Dr Mohd Khairuddin Aman Razali (pic) said.

He said of the amount, furniture products made up the highest export at RM9.14 billion followed by plywood products (RM3.40 billion) and sawn timber (RM3.37 billion).

"We hope that the value of exports this year will increase or at least matches last year's figure," he told reporters after launching the state's Community Plantation programme in Batu Kikir, here on Monday.

Present were Malaysian Panel-Products Manufacturers' Association (MPMA) chairman, Datuk Wira Sheikh Othman Rahman, Plus Intervest managing di-

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rector, Datuk Chua Hock Gee, Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) Chairman Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor, and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) director-general, Dr Khali Aziz Hamzah.

Mohd Khairuddin said the programme was aimed at increasing the supply of wood species, which were declining, through the plantation concept besides raising the income of the B40 (bottom 40 per cent of the household income group).

"It is also aimed at introducing rapid-growing



tree species such as Batai and Eucalyptus to ensure timber sustainability, as well as reducing dependence on permanent forests for raw

material resources.

"The community plantation created will provide benefits to various quarters, especially to the B40 group. Idle lands, even in small sizes, can be optimised and given added value with the introduction of the community plantation.

"Similarly, the buy-back guarantee can help increase the income of the B40 group consistently," he said, adding that the project involved 20 participants.

He said since 2016, FRIM, in collaboration with MPMA and Plus Intervest, had con-

ducted various studies to determine forest species that could be cultivated and harvested in less than six years.

"The export of Eucalyptus timber last year recorded RM3 billion but for the last six months, the value had halved to RM1.49 billion due to the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Eucalyptus tree produces wood that is heavy, strong, durable and solid, making it the most valuable source of timber in world.

Eucalyptus is a high-quality raw material for pulp, paper

and energy. Eucalyptus plantations are expected to be able to meet the demand for timber in the future.

"A total of 822 species of Eucalyptus are reported to be found in Australia, New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines.

"These species are widely used for the production of pulp and paper, charcoal, and as landscape trees and oil paste. It also grows fast and can reach a height of up to 100 meters and is said to be the highest flowering plant in the world," he said. -Bernama