

Businesses urged to foray into bamboo industry

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Global Innovation & Entrepreneurships Foundation (GIEF) has called on entrepreneurs and the public to foray into the bamboo industry as bamboos have many potential uses.

Its founder and chairman Datuk Ghazi Sheikh Ramli said as the bamboo industry was now worth around RM300 million a year, it was GIEF's mission to help the nation reap the benefits of bamboos.

"GIEF can be the first contact for SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and the public to appreciate the potential of bamboos," he told Business Times in an interview recently.

GIEF is a non-government organisation that promotes green lifestyles through innovation for the nation, or Greenovation, that focuses on bamboos.

As at end-2013, there were more than 20 bamboo-based businesses.

Eight companies and universities such as Universiti Teknologi Mara

and Universiti Putra Malaysia have signed memoranda of understandings with GIEF to support the industry.

"Lukily, there are strong players among the companies and because of that GIEF has started Consortium Bamboo Malaysia, which consists of 15 core players," he said.

Ghazi said one of the challenges that SMEs and other players in the industry were facing was the old mindset about bamboos, that the plant is a village product with no value and potential.

He said in developed countries, the value of bamboos had been expanded to include a technology that greatly benefits environment and economies.

In making the bamboo industry an important business sector, GIEF is focusing on five application areas, namely food, fashion, housing, transportation and entertainment, through "The Bamboo World Concept".

"There are 60 different opportu-



Kedah Chief Minister **Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir** (centre) and GIEF founder and chairman **Datuk Ghazi Sheikh Ramli** (left) taking a closer look at bamboo products at the World Bamboo Day in Kedah recently.

nities to work with bamboos but we need the willingness and desire to take the product further," Ghazi added.

In promoting the industry, GIEF held the World Bamboo Day (WBD) in Kedah on September 29 and 30.

Entering its third year, the event had attracted more than 15 exhibitors such as Majuperak Go Green Sdn Bhd, Inovar Resources Sdn Bhd, Kenaboi Nature Resources and Bamboo Malaysia Sdn Bhd,

with 300 participation from the public.

It was a success, given the feedback received from target markets, youth and entrepreneurs, prompting GIEF to come out with a training programme to share knowledge and skills on the industry.

Due to bamboos' potential, the Kedah government will also implement the Kedah Bamboo Agenda to generate economic activities from the plant.

Next year, GIEF will organise the WBD in Sarawak and take part in the 10th World Bamboo Congress (WBC) 2015 in Damyang, South Korea.

"It is our hope that the 2018 WBC will be organised by us and held in Malaysia," said Ghazi.

In the last 20 years, the WBC has attracted at least 400 participants, including world-renowned experts in bamboo design, construction, and architecture, from more than 30 countries.