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Indian Wood & Allied Panels

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C O N T E N T S

Dynamic Association of Trees with Humanity for their Scary and Haunting Nature to Large Scale Farming for Industrial and Economical Transformation

Dhiman and Ashsih Mishra, Sustainable Agroforestry Initiatives, Greenlam Industries Ltd., New Delhi

Trees and forests are unique gifts to humanity on earth. They are essential elements to maintain oxygen-carbon dioxide balance to sustain life forms which are dependant for the very existence on this vital element on earth. Human association with trees is since time immemorial. This association has always been dynamic and multidimensional in providing goods and services including shelter & food for the survival of mankind during the early civilization phase to expanding role in transforming industrial landscape and economical empowerment in the recent past. Tree's role in human safety is still significant in this modern era. Relevant examples of this nature are being repeatedly noticed when floods cause heavy damage to property and life in many locations. Persons while being carried away by fast current flooded waters try to clinch the trees en-route and some of them even save their lives. A special case of 2014 floods in Kashmir valley is mentioned here which caused heavy damage to property and life including death of 287 persons. There were cases when many people trapped in flood waters could catch hold of poplar trees while drowning en-route, climbed and remained on them till they were aerially lifted and rescued (Fig.-1 and Fig.-2). These poplar trees have been grown by locals around their land holdings even in urban areas to provide wood for low cost packing cases for quite some times. The contribution of such trees in saving lives in such difficult circumstances is beyond their monetary valuation.

Over the centuries, people in many societies, developed an extreme psychological impression of bad omen for some selected trees. This aspect, at times, haunts them and this phenomenon is wide spread and deep rooted in human psyche in many countries including India. Such trees are seldom believed to be abode of devils and ghosts and largely exit in isolated places especially around cemeteries, cremation grounds and other locations. A large number of stories of such scary and haunting trees are available in many parts of the country especially in rural areas. Some of these trees and stories invariably find mention in movies, literature, vernaculars and folk songs. There is a popular belief that it is not advisable to go near to them or sit under them as it is believed to be the dwelling place of ghosts and other supernatural beings.

This scary nature of certain trees has also evolved to an emotional connect for reportedly avoiding bad omen ultimately leading to worshiping many of them. It is believed that such trees being abode of deities are honored for protecting the local people from harm caused by natural disasters or evil influences. Numerous trees encircled with sacred threads, sacred spots made at the base of trees, sacred incent sticks and lights (deepaks) burning at their base, and small stones kept and worshiped thereunder could be spotted in different parts of the country. Such trees are now called as "Sacred Trees" and group of them as "Scared Groves" which are found in almost all states across the country. "Sacred trees" are very close to the religious sentiments of the society. In Hindu faith, there are many such trees which are worshipped in many parts of the country. Many of such trees have been documented from prevedic period and the tradition to worship and regard them as deities has inherited through generations. A seal discovered at Mohenjodaro, one of the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization depicts the peepal tree, whose scientific name viz., Ficus religiosa reminds us that taxonomists while naming its specific name, a couple of centuries back, could find its traditional association with religion and worshiping.

Peepal is overwhelmingly considered a tree of God-Brahma in addition to many other deities and their reincarnations. The tree replanted by locals as shown in Fig.-2 had an old aged sacred peepal tree at the same spot that got uprooted reportedly by loosening anchorage of its damaged roots system. It was regarded a very sacred Kul Devta (Paharia) tree for many generations in a remote village of Himachal Pradesh. The tree was a source of spiritual and religious customs for the locals and accordingly they immediately replanted it following religious ceremony/rituals at the same spot against the wishes of a few adjoining residents who were resisting its replanting. The sapling

Figure 1: People clinching to poplar trees in Kashmir Valley (left) and being aerially lifted (right) during 2014 floods.

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used for re-planting was a clone of the same old sacred tree that was picked up from a sprout and maintained in a container till planted.

The scared faith towards these trees is not restricted to Hindu religion but similar sentiments exists in Budhism (Bodhy tree), Christian (Christmas tree), Sikh (Reetha Sahib, Beri Sahab etc.), Jainism (Bel tree) and may be in others. These are landmark trees in and around villages and townships especially around worship places which are spots for routine social gathering, functions and religious activities. Many of community protected trees are still not properly documented asides being revered so much that no one tries to cause any damage to them. From forestry perspective these are considered silvicultural heritage & botanical pilgrimage and represent rare living samples of old and large sized living trees.

Deities aboding these sacred trees are propitiated to obtain timely rain or good harvest or other favors. People generally believe that their deity blesses the worshippers and if not appeased, they become angry and their wrath is witnessed in the form of evil spirits, epidemics, diseases and other calamities. The religious sentiments attached with these trees are so strong that despite increased literacy and modernization, people in general do not overlook the traditional worshiping associated with them. There are numerous episodes those remind their scared value and the one, related to Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai for marrying a peepal tree in Banaras during Feb., 2007 to avoid the influence of Manglik (Astrologically Mars bearing) which was considered to be inauspicious for her looming marriage, remained in the public memory for quite longtime.

In some states, a great emphasis is now being given for their documentation and protection as they are a rich source of biodiversity and wild gene pool. The state of Haryana has started a scheme called "Pran Vayu Devta Pension Scheme" under which 3810 trees aged above 75 years are provided Rs. 2750/ tree each year. The guardians, individuals or Panchayats protecting and looking after them are being paid this pension. The selected trees have substantial ecological significance and represent approximately 40 diverse religious and other species including Peepal, Banyan, Neem, Mango, Jaal, Gular, Krishna Kadamba, and Pilkhan among others. These trees are on various types of land, from private and Panchayat to institutional and government properties. Hundreds of community protected sacred trees of different species have been documented from Himachal Pradesh and reported in ENVIS, Dehradun during 2010.

Beyond scared value, people gradually started valuing them for their use for fruit, food, and shelter to goods in the form of wood and other non wood products. Forest management initiated around 16 decades back in the country mainly focused on exploitation of valuable timber species whereas exploitation of most non timber forest produce remained largely unregulated and as a source of livelihood issue for local inhabitants. Forests were considered as main source of revenue through sale of timber and non-timber produce. Wood based industry started developing around forests mainly with the active support of government agencies. While 1st Indian Forest Policy of 1894 focused on documentation and demarcation of forest resources, 2nd Forest Policy of 1952 laid much emphasis on production forestry especially for industrial wood production leading to expansion of infrastructure of wood based industry in the country. The last Forest Policy of 1988 saw a departure from the earlier one which focused on conservation and preservation of forest resources for ecological and environmental consideration rather than wood production. An attempt was also made to prepare a new Forest Policy around a decade back, its draft was widely circulated for consultation but has yet not been adopted. This draft policy, by and large, retained the core essence of production and protection aspects as was outlines in 1988 Forest Policy. The WBI was left to make its own arrangement for wood raw material that they ably did it and facilitated creating a large wood production resource outside government forests especially on farmers fields. This helped the country in evolving a better strategy for taking plantation forestry outside forests ultimately leading to provide a better space for conservation of natural forests and in meeting its ever increasing wood availability for diverse utilities.

Figure 2: Peepal tree re-planted in-situ in place of its uprooted spot by the locals with full religious ceremony/rituals (Puja).

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The planting trees for their good values has always been closely associated with the human civilization, their systematic and regular plantations have been undertaken by rulers in the beginning and by the forest department later on. There were some stray examples where locals were heavily dependent on certain trees species in forest scarce locations in cold and hot desert locations where they have been deliberately planting easy to plant trees around their homes and fields. A classical example of this nature is in the inner Himalayas where poplar were moved with human migrations and have been planted by them for every wood based needs in absence of other woods in such forest scarce locations. Elsewhere, actual beginning of tree farming on appreciable and impactful scale was started by farmers during 1970's at their own or with support from other agencies. Impactful tree farming was initiated by a Patel family in Gujarat wherein eucalyptus was planted under high density for firewood production which was in higher demand in surrounding locations. The model later on was much advertised and was commonly referred as High Density Energy Plantations (HDEP). At organizational level, the much discussed poplar farming was started by farmers with the help of match industry for matchwood production in North India around the same period. This is now widely quoted as highly successful tree farming model for industrial wood production. This model soon found appreciation at government levels that folded into the first contract farming model on long gestation tree species under which loan were arranged from financial banks, technical know-how and quality supplied and wood on maturity was procured by the industry on already agreed prices. Soon this model found favour with other wood based industry and they tried it with other tree species and locations. Paper industry replicated this model with eucalyptus for paper pulp and later some major players of panel industry have started promoting tree plantations around their factories in different locations of the country. Punjab and Haryana forest departments also promoted eucalyptus planting on farmer's fields initially during at their own 1970s but later through externally aided projects.

It is clear from the above narrations that farmers started and continuing growing trees on their fields due to a constant demand for wood from WBI. Farmers do not find much domestic use but grow them for supplying their wood to WBI. A complete value chain has developed around these trees from growing nurseries & plantations to their harvesting and wood processing in the factories. This relationship between farmers and WBI is evolving and is becoming very strong and unavoidable in the current context (Fig.-3) with rapid expansion of new wood based industry across the country. Greenlam Industries Ltd. is new entrants in wood panel business this year with one of its upcoming unit in south India started producing MDF. The authors are associated with this company for technical support in R&D and plantation activities on trees for wood panels. Unlike most other WBI, Greenlam is fist of its kind which simultaneously started wood panel manufacturing and promotion of plantations including R&D to support wood raw material production around the vicinity of its factories.

The bulk of the wood is now produced on farmland. According to an estimate over 90% of wood is produced on farmland, 4% is obtained from the government forests and 6% from imports. Poplar grown on a limited geographical area of North India has been a lifeline for plywood and plyboard industry. According to an estimate around 60% of ply in the country was being produced some time back from its wood. With expansion of panel industry, additional plywood in other parts of the country is now made from other species and eucalyptus is now a major wood in panel products especially MDF and Particle Board. Paper making earlier were totally dependent on wood supplies from government forests and is now largely using farm grown wood from eucalyptus, casuarinas and su-babul. Eucalyptus is now a top planted tree in the country and is economically empowering lakhs of farmers across the country.

The old proverb "MONEY DOES NOT GROW ON TREES" has lost its relevance and this is virtually happening now. Famers are now growing trees for money which they have been doing it for 4-5 decades. A general trend for sale of poplar in Yamuna Nagar belt is Rs. 2 lakh for 2 years, 3 lakh for 3 years, 4 Lakh for 4 years old poplar. In the recent past, a farmer in Roop Nagar district of Punjab has sold 5 acre poplar of 5 years age for Rs. 45 Lakh. It is generally believed that cost of production in poplar based agroforestry is recovered from sugarcane and other crops grown with it and the sale value of trees is net returns to growers. There are now many reports that the net returns from growing eucalyptus in north India are touching Rs.70000/acre/year and from poplar Rs. 2 lakh/acre/year.

Figure 3: Farmer-Industry interface and strong symbiotic synergy in growing trees.

Figure 4: Peeling logs from 2.5 years old harvested poplar (Photo-curtsy R K Sapra). Reports from Yamuna Nagar indicates that around 90% poplar plantations are now routinely harvested between 3 to 3.5 years with some stray cases of harvesting at below 2 years age and around 5% over 5 years age.

Figure 5: Symbiotic synergy with WBI is key in the success of Industrial AF. Top left: Billeting poplar at saw mill for match splints-its first established commercial use, Bottom left: Lop & top from farm grown plantations (Eucalyptus and poplar in this case) being chipped for firewood supply to industry- these trees attaining a status of zero-waste, and Right: Sainik Door Board exclusively made from poplar, has been reported as economical and high demand product made by Century in its Karnal factory (photo courtesy. Dr. C N. Pandey).

Figure 6: Two essential ingredients in the success of farm wood production are strong R&D support and effective extension. Left: Eucalyptus clonal trial of multiple clones, helps in selecting suitable clones for specific locations, and Right: Extension through farmer's fairs proved useful.

Figure 7: Planting model and integration of agriculture crops are evolving over the years. The production models with poplar and eucalyptus shown in these pictures are from different parts of North India and undertaken by farmers themselves. A mention is made of the last photo of roses grown in poplar plantation that was undertaken around 2 decades back by a progressive farmer of Ludhiana District, Punjab who had a small cottage scale distillation unit to extract incense from flowers. At that time farmer was reportedly getting Rs. 2 Lakh/acre/year net returns from the combined production system.

Economic returns from growing trees are gradually increasing with increase in wood prices. The harvesting period for poplar was fixed as 20 years when it was first introduced in India. It has gradually declined initially to 12 years than 8 years and now many farmers are harvesting it anytime from 2-6 years based on their experience and market conditions. Similarly, in case of eucalyptus majority of its plantations grown for paper pulp and panel manufacturing are now harvested at 4 years age.

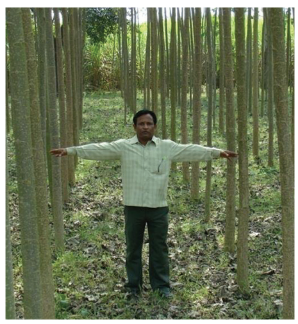


Figure 8: "Greed Thrills but Kills". Planting too many plants per unit area taxes the growers and affects the wood production of desired quality and quantity significantly decline in high density plantations. The plantation shown in the photo is that of a farmer from U.P. who had planted 600 plants/acre which is beyond recommended number for plants/ha. The situation is worst in case of Eucalyptus where some farmers plant upto 4000 plants/ha in some locations. This kind of greed is against biological and silvicultural principles of tree productivity.

Conclusion

The story presented here indicates that the human behavior in relation to tree conservation and production is constantly evolving. There is a gradual dilution of haunting and scary nature of trees but their psychological connect for reverence is still deep rooted in the society. The gradual transition of our association with trees from shelter to safety, scary, haunting, sacred, other goods & services and finally their large scale farming leading to industrial development landscape and economical transformation is very interesting and helping a great deal in transforming rural India. There is no parallel example of such a large wood resource created and managed on farmland by small farmers anywhere in the world.❑

Plywood may be the green building material of the future — EarthTalk

By Ryan Chen

EarthTalk
Journal-Courier/Romolo Tavani

Plywood is a manufactured composite material consisting of multiple wooden sheets layered on top of one another and glued together. To assess its sustainability, one needs to assess that of its constituent parts, both the wood sheets and the glue in between them.

Scientists utilize life cycle analysis to assess the environmental impact of the material from production, transportation and utilization to end of life. By observing the carbon footprint in each part of the material's lifetime, we can then gain a holistic understanding of the true net carbon footprint of a material.

Using life cycle analysis, a research group from the Indian Plywood Industries Research and Training Institute analyzed the carbon footprint of plywood across its lifetime. The group concluded that plywood can be a carbon-negative material (removes carbon from the atmosphere) as its wooden material absorbs carbon given that it is not incinerated. In fact, the entire process of production and transportation of plywood produces fewer carbon emissions than the amount of carbon it contains, thus making it carbon-negative.

However, the environmental impact of the glue in plywood is not as clear cut. Countless types of glues can be used in the production of plywood, with each differing in their environmental impact. Glues can be categorized into two groups: those containing volatile organic compounds like formaldehyde and those that do not. Formaldehyde is a harmful substance released as a gas during the lifetime of the glue. Prolonged exposure to formaldehyde can cause a plethora of human and animal health problems. Thus, plywood is only safe for the environment when it is produced with glues not containing the compounds. However, when produced with safe glues, plywood is highly safe for the environment.

Compared to aluminum, plastic and concrete, plywood is crowned as the most sustainable material.

So, plywood is a green material, but is it good for making furniture or for home construction?

Plywood is cheaper, more durable and more flexible than solid wood, making it a versatile material for many furniture-making applications. Manufactured in thin large sheets, plywood is perfect for assembling into shelving, tables and beds. Plywood can also be an excellent material for home construction because of its ease of working and its dimensional stability. Because plywood comes in pre-processed sheets, it can be used at the construction site easily without further processing.

Moreover, plywood is dimensionally stable, meaning it tends to maintain its structure over time, making it a great material for areas in need of structural rigidity. So, in home construction, plywood can be found commonly used to construct floors, walls and roofs to provide the home with excellent structural support.

To an environmentally conscious consumer, plywood serves as a great carbon-negative alternative to materials like plastic, aluminum and solid wood. However, it is imperative to make sure the plywood you purchase is produced in a way that is produced responsibly.

The Forest Stewardship Council is a non-profit organization that certifies wood that is sustainably harvested. When purchasing plywood, ensure it is certified and that it contains no added formaldehyde.❑

Agroforestry: Driving India's Green and Brown Revolution

By R. K. Sapra

Vision

In northern India, adventurous innovative farmers have embraced the cultivation of poplar and eucalyptus trees, which has been yielding more profits than the traditional agricultural crops. However, from 2011 to 2021, the expansion of trees outside forests (TOF) has been limited, with agroforestry practices accounting for only 5-6% of the geographical area in Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. To develop Green Revolution Region into export hub of wood-based industries, the TOF coverage in this region may be increased to 10% of its geographical area by 2047 through the promotion of agroforestry. While the wood panelling industry is well-established in the Yamunanagar region of Haryana, known as the plywood capital of India, it produces about one-third of the country's panel products. Therefore, it is crucial to develop this area into an export hub for wood products derived from farm wood, with the aim of establishing ten clusters of wood-based industries in the region by 2047.

Current Status

The Green Revolution significantly increased wheat and paddy production, particularly in Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. However, this surplus has led to several negative consequences, such as soil degradation, severe groundwater depletion and declining crop yields in these states. Additionally, issues related to the safety of grains from pests, inadequate grain storage and the high costs of transporting surplus grains to deficit regions of the country have become apparent. In response, the Government of India is promoting crop diversification and encouraging the cultivation of alternative crops like maize, millets, cotton, basmati rice, and tree crops.

According to the 2020 report "Trees Outside Forest Resources in India" by the Forest Survey of India, timber production from TOF in Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh was 22 lakh cubic meters, 25 lakh cubic meters, and 75 lakh cubic meters, respectively. Following a favourable ruling by the Hon'ble Apex Court, the wood-based industry in Uttar Pradesh has rapidly expanded, leading to a decline in the supply of veneers and farm woods to the Yamunanagar market. This timber scarcity has driven up the prices of eucalyptus and poplar wood (of girths 35 cm and above) to approximately Rs. 12,000/tonne and Rs. 15,000/tonne, respectively. Consequently, several plywood units have been forced to shut their businesses or operate below their operating capacity, with some relocating their machinery to other states including Bihar, Bengal, and Kerala and even to Nepal.

Furthermore, the establishment of Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF) units has been spurred by the growing demand for MDF due to its versatility, superior finishing, and carpenter-friendly workability. MDF, which is 25% cheaper than plywood, has become increasingly popular, driven by industry outreach and the easy availability of ready-made furniture. As a result, the use of MDF is expected to increase, leading to higher farm wood prices and a decline in plywood usage in the Indian market, aligning with international trends. This transitional phase, expected to last two to three years, may lead to an increase in

the area under tree crops, boosting the availability of farm wood. Moreover, integrating trees with agricultural crops can mitigate the damage caused by heatwaves, necessitating the increase tree coverage. The establishment of MDF plants that utilize smaller wood sizes (of girths less than 35 cm) will further encourage tree crop cultivation, potentially reducing the harvesting cycle to 2-3 years and lowering raw material costs to around Rs. 8,000/tonne. Therefore, the aggressive promotion of agroforestry on a larger scale in this region is essential to meet the timber demands of the wood panel industry at reasonable prices.

Promotion of Tree Farming

To stimulate the promotion of agroforestry, the Punjab Government has formulated a comprehensive plan that includes establishing a consortium of government bodies ensuring fair pricing for farm woods, creating cultivation agreements between farmers and industries, providing annuity payments through soft loans, developing infrastructure such as demonstration farms and an e-timber portal, engaging Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana for guidance and research, clearly dividing responsibilities between forest and agriculture departments, strengthening extension services, enforcing mandi laws, accrediting nurseries, and more.

Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh Government is implementing an ambitious greening plan that encompasses agroforestry and the establishment of MDF and large-sized plywood units. An inland container depot in Kalanaur is also under development to position Yamunanagar (Haryana) as a hub for promoting the export of wood panel products. It is crucial to enhance R&D initiatives aimed at increasing the area under tree crop cultivation, which could help mitigate the impact of heatwaves while also boosting farmland profitability. Additionally, promoting the cultivation of fruit and fodder trees alongside traditional agricultural crops will be key to gaining support from small and marginal farmers.

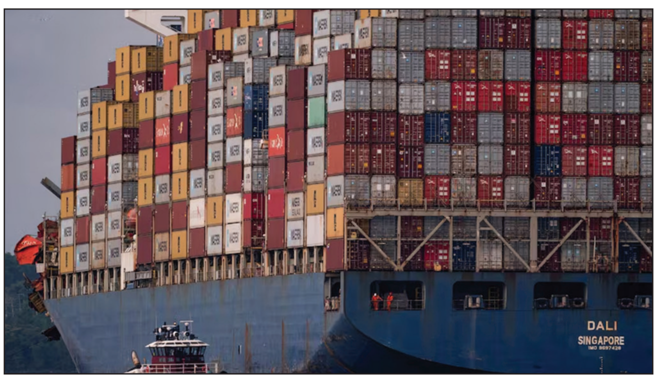
Conclusion

Expanding the area under tree crop cultivation will more than double wood production, driving the growth of wood-based industries, and creating employment and business opportunities. Apart from crop diversification, tree farming will improve soil quality, conserve the declining water table, enhance carbon sequestration, and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, ultimately leading to a "Brown Revolution" in the nation's food basket.

The writer is a retired officer of Indian Forest Service and former Managing Director, Haryana Forest Development Corporation.❑

'EU laws on sustainable products to hurt exports from developing nations'

According to the European Commission, the new regulation aims to enhance the circularity, energy performance, and other environmental sustainability aspects of EU products



The regulation mandates that imported products meet stringent sustainability standards, including a Digital Product Passport for traceability. (Photo: Reuters)

The European Union's (EU's) newly passed regulation, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), will incur high costs and is expected to hurt exports from developing countries, a Delhi-based think tank reported. According to the European Commission, the new regulation aims to enhance the circularity, energy performance, and other environmental sustainability aspects of EU products.

The ESPR will encompass all products by 2030, starting with the regulation of items such as textiles, furniture, mattresses, tyres, detergents, paints, lubricants, iron, and steel from January 2026.

"The ESPR could hurt exports from developing countries due to the increased costs and challenges of meeting the high EU standards and compliance requirements," the Global Trade Research Initiative said. It added that the regulation will elevate product costs due to necessary changes in production processes.

Since the regulated products are mostly consumer goods, this price increase might contribute to inflation in the EU, the report noted.

From January 2026, Indian products exported to the EU will be required to include a quick response code or barcode that provides detailed information to demonstrate compliance with the prescribed European sustainability standards, the report indicated.

The regulation mandates that imported products meet stringent sustainability standards, including the use of a digital product passport for traceability. These measures aim to ensure that all products entering the EU market adhere to high environmental standards, thereby influencing global trade practices.

The ESPR expands upon the EU's existing Ecodesign Directive, which currently covers only energy-related products. The regulation was proposed over two years ago and was officially adopted by European Parliament and European Council in April 2024 and May 2024, respectively..❑

Navigating economic downturn: strategies for the timber and wood products trade industry

During economic downturns, governments may implement fiscal and monetary stimulus measures to support businesses and stimulate economic recovery in timber industry.

Proactive strategies can enhance companies' resilience to challenges posed by economic contractions. (Credit: Hans from Pixabay)

Introduction

The timber and wood products trade industry is not immune to the impacts of economic downturns. Whether triggered by global events, financial crises, or shifts in consumer behaviour, economic downturns can significantly affect businesses operating within the sector. In this article, we explore the challenges posed by economic downturns and strategies for resilience in the timber and wood products trade industry.

Understanding economic downturns

An economic downturn refers to a period of negative economic growth, typically characterised by declining GDP, rising unemployment, and reduced consumer spending. Downturns can result from various factors, including recessions, financial crises, geopolitical tensions, and natural disasters. These economic contractions can have far-reaching implications for businesses across industries, including the timber and wood products trade industry.

Impact on the timber industry

Economic downturns can affect the timber industry in several ways:

1. Reduced Demand: During economic downturns, consumers and businesses may cut back on discretionary spending, leading to reduced demand for timber and wood products used in construction, furniture manufacturing, and other industries.

2. Supply Chain Disruptions: Economic downturns can disrupt global supply chains, affecting the availability of raw materials, transportation logistics, and market access for timber and wood products exporters and importers.

3. Financial Challenges: Businesses in the timber industry may face financial challenges during economic downturns, including reduced access to credit, declining revenues, and liquidity constraints.

Strategies for resilience

To navigate economic downturns effectively, businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry can implement various strategies:

1. Diversification: Diversifying product offerings, customer segments, and geographic markets can help mitigate the impact of economic downturns by reducing reliance on any single market or product category.

2. Cost Rationalisation: Proactively managing costs through efficiency improvements, inventory management, and operational optimisation can help preserve profit margins and financial stability during economic downturns.

3. Strategic Partnerships: Collaborating with suppliers, distributors, and industry partners can enhance resilience by sharing resources, expertise, and market insights to adapt to changing market conditions.

4. Innovation and Adaptation: Embracing innovation and adapting to evolving consumer preferences and market trends can position businesses for success during economic downturns by offering differentiated products and services.

Government support and stimulus measures

During economic downturns, governments may implement fiscal and monetary stimulus measures to support businesses and stimulate economic recovery. These measures may include tax incentives, infrastructure investment programmes, and monetary policy adjustments to stabilise financial markets and encourage spending.

Conclusion

In conclusion, economic downturns present significant challenges for businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry, impacting demand, supply chains, and financial stability. However, by implementing proactive strategies such as diversification, cost rationalisation, strategic partnerships, and innovation, companies can enhance resilience and weather the challenges posed by economic contractions. Additionally, government support and stimulus measures can provide critical assistance to businesses during downturns, reinforcing the importance of collaboration between industry stakeholders and policymakers to foster a sustainable and resilient business environment. *(Source: Timber trade Journal).*❑

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In the evolving landscape of building materials, Greenply Industries Limited stands as a beacon of innovation and sustainability. With four state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities across India, Greenply is a leading player in the plywood industry, offering a diverse range of interior products—from plywood and MDF to decorative veneers and PVC solutions—serving both domestic and international markets.

The recent launch of Greenply Gold 2.0 marks a significant milestone, elevating the standards of plywood products and responding to the growing consumer demand for sustainable and healthy building materials. With meticulous craftsmanship akin to the precision found in pure gold, Greenply Gold 2.0 promises unmatched performance, durability, and eco-friendliness.

Greenply Gold 2.0 is engineered to meet the rigorous demands of modern interiors. It has undergone extensive BWP testing, demonstrating exceptional resistance to moisture and water damage for up to 72 hours. This premium plywood not only excels in durability but also boasts impressive fire resistance, maintaining structural integrity for up to 48 minutes with minimal smoke emission. Importantly, it is free from harmful formaldehyde emissions, ensuring a safe indoor environment for you and your family.

In addition to its performance credentials, Greenply Gold 2.0 offers long-lasting protection against common threats like pests and decay. Its resistance to borers, fungi, and termites provides consumers with peace of mind, backed by an industry-leading 30-year warranty. The incorporation of Vira Shield Technology further enhances its appeal, effectively killing 99.9% of viruses and 99.7% of bacteria, making it an ideal choice for health-conscious consumers.

Greenply Gold 2.0 reflects Greenply Industries' unwavering commitment to innovation and sustainability. By utilizing a 100% composed core and panels seamlessly stitched with hot melt glue, the company has successfully created a product that marries durability with environmental responsibility. This eco-friendly approach not only reduces the carbon footprint but also supports healthier living spaces.

With Greenply Gold 2.0, consumers can experience the perfect blend of luxury and functionality. This groundbreaking product is not just a choice for today but an investment in a sustainable future. As Greenply Industries continues to set benchmarks in quality and innovation, Greenply Gold 2.0 stands out as a testament to their dedication to excellence in the plywood industry. Whether you're renovating your home or embarking on a new project, Greenply Gold 2.0 is truly a plywood pure as gold.❑

12 New Smart Cities 10 Lakh New Jobs Ashwini Vaishnaw on Cabinet Decisions

The cabinet has greenlighted a mega project to build 12 industrial smart cities across the 10 states, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced. The government has earmarked ₹ 28,602 crore for this big push on manufacturing, the minister said after a meeting of the Union cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Altogether, the smart city project would employ nearly 10 lakh people. It would also indirectly create 30 lakh new jobs. The investment potential will be of 1.52 lakh crore.

The world-class greenfield industrial smart cities will be built with 'plug-n-play' and 'walk-to-work' concepts, the government said in a statement. The move is set to transform the industrial landscape of the country creating a robust network of

industrial nodes and cities that will significantly boost economic growth and global competitiveness.❑

Duroply Launches Range of Dyed Veneers 'Roma Collection'

Duroply, India's premium and most experienced among the leading plywood companies, has launched a contemporary range of Dyed Veneers - 'Roma Collection'. This premium range of dyed veneers is a celebration of the intricate and timeless beauty of Italian architecture, embodying the sophisticated charm that Italy is renowned for.

Launched under the flagship Duro Nature's Signature Brand, these veneers are for the discerning audiences who value elegance and beauty in their day-to-day life.

Announcing the launch of 'Roma Collection', Akhilesh Chitlangia, MD and CEO of Duroply, said, "Our research suggested that urban India was looking for a premium range of exquisite dyed veneers that will enhance beauty and add elegance to their dream homes. We launched Roma Collection after extensive study into the vogue colours of the year, ensuring that it meets contemporary aesthetic standards while offering timeless appeal.

These veneers enhance beauty and add class to the home of the discerning audience who aspire to live their life in style with grace and sophistication. Specially designed in Italy, these stunning veneers are available in eight colors, all inspired from Roman Architecture. These attractive veneers can be used in resorts, bungalows, villas, hotels, designer showrooms, high end luxury flats and apartments. These veneers are uniform in their texture, color, and thickness radiating the same charm and appeal across the entire property."

Chitlangia added, "The Roma Collection is a testimony to Duroply's famed culture of customer centric innovation which helps us launch products that the industry follows later on."

In line with Duroply's commitment of staying at the forefront of design trends, the Roma Collection has been launched in eight distinctive colors meticulously designed and dyed in Italy, ready to add a sophisticated touch of elegance to any space. The soothing pastel color schemes comprise Alpinewood Chestnut Brown, Alpinewood Crystal Grey, Basaltino Charcoal Grey, French Nerowood, Havana Coral Peach, Platinum Coffee, Platinum Galaxy, and Zulu Ash Burl.

Targeted at architects, interior designers, and high-end customers, the aesthetic color scheme and outstanding quality of the Roma Collection make it an ideal choice for the sensitive individuals looking to create a statement with their interior decor.

The Roma Collection range of stylish veneers not only stands out for its aesthetic appeal but equally for its functional qualities. These veneers are available in sizes 8 ft x 4 ft and 10 ft x 4 ft. The front face veneer, with an industry highest thickness of 0.55+mm, is reinforced with an Extra Back Face Sheet (EBF) ensuring that the dyed veneer maintains its integrity without warping or cupping, providing exceptional durability and longevity.

With a touch of acrylic or water-based polish, this collection is Moisture Resistant (MR) grade veneer, offering outstanding water resistance enhancing its application and usage. Together with Duroply's famed Lifetime Guarantee Against Insect Infestation, the Roma Collection ensures peace of mind to its tasteful beholders.

The Roma Collection is now available pan India ready to enhance beauty and sophistication of avant-garde discerning audience across the country.❑

Century Plyboards to Upscale Plywood Production by 30%

Wood products maker Century Plyboards plans to expand its plywood production capacity by around 30 per cent in the next 12-15 months, with a capital expenditure of around Rs 140 crore. The planned production capacity expansion will involve both greenfield and brownfield projects. The Kolkata-based company, which is the market leader in the country's plywood industry, is working on setting up a new facility with an investment of around Rs.100 crore.

In the Plywood segment, the company currently has a production capacity of 339,600 CBM per annum. In the first quarter of this fiscal, capacity utilisation stood at around 75 per cent.

The plywood market is presently estimated at around Rs 27,500 crore with around 30 per cent of it being operated by organised players. In the overall plywood market, Century Plyboards garners around 8 per cent share. In the organised segment, the company controls anywhere between 25-30 per cent market share.

The organised plywood market is growing at a high single-digit rate annually. The company expects the country's plywood industry to double within the next six to seven years.

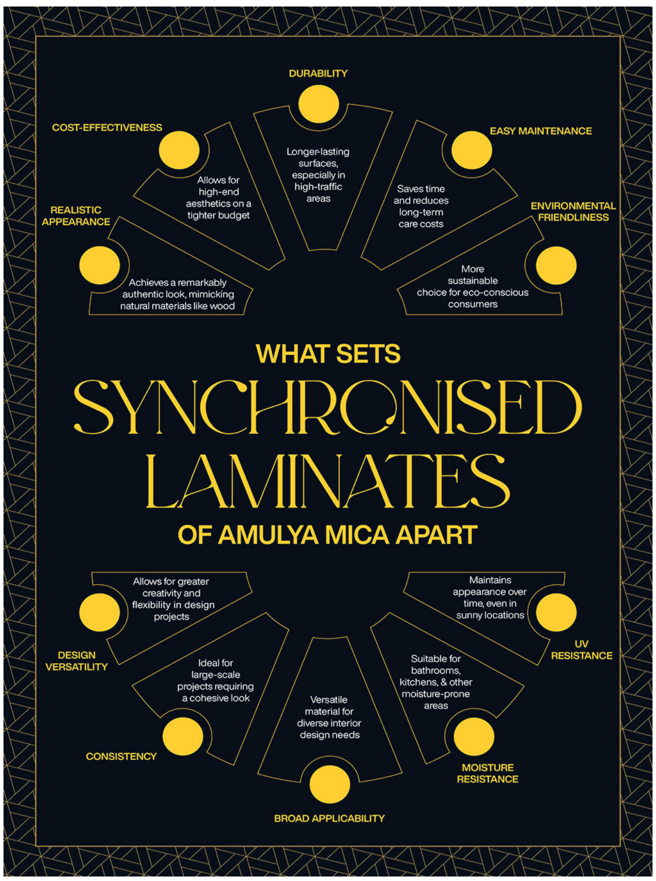
Due to the sharp rise in input costs, the company hiked prices in the Plywood segment twice during this fiscal year --around 2 per cent in both the first and second quarters. In Laminates, it hiked prices once-- around 3 per cent in the second quarter.

In the Rs 8000-crore Laminates industry, the company has a market share of around 8 per cent. During the last financial year, the Laminate segment contributed around 17 per cent to Century Plyboards' total revenues. Among its product portfolio, the company exports its Laminates only.❑

Amulya Mica's Synchronized Laminate – Some New Ranges !!

We feel honored to claim as the introducer of the Synchronized laminates in India, which is made with world's best design paper and perfect embossing of texture in plate with design. Available in thickness 1.25mm, this product presents itself as the replacement of natural wood and veneers. It is our Amulya team's passion & dedication to craft a quality product for quality & design conscious people, where one can find natural grain feeling while touching with durability. **A true value for money with Perfect Technology.**

Amulya Synchronized designs are the most Premium, latest & the best that one can buy in laminates! We are exporting this product in European Countries, USA & Australia etc. ***For Nature lover & Quality conscious people, Amulya Synchronized Laminates will be perfectly sync with their dream, design & décor like no other surface.***

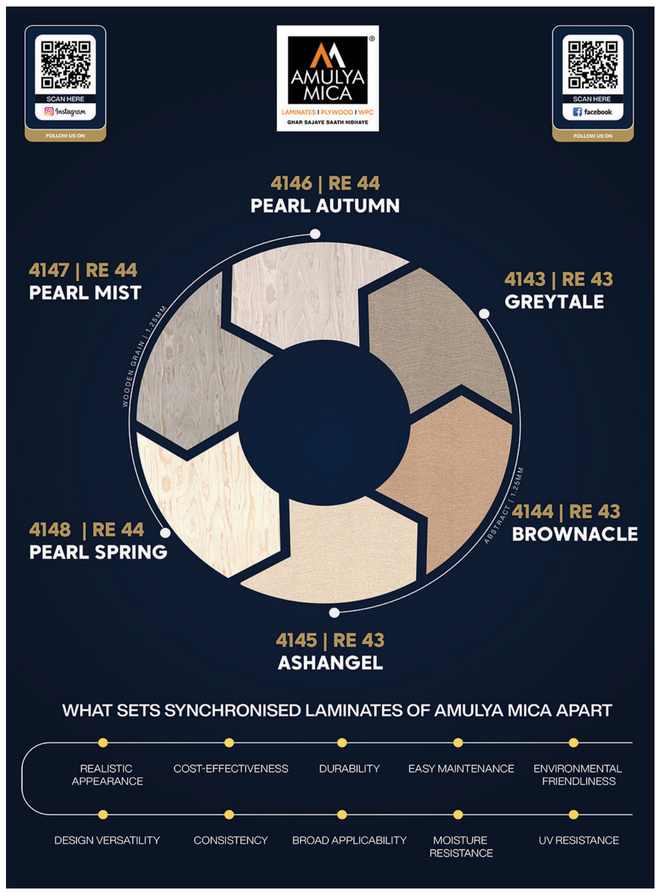


We are thrilled to introduce our latest 1.25 Synchronized Laminates Collection, designed to elevate your creative projects to new heights. The exclusive range features SIX stunning patterns that seamlessly blend contemporary aesthetics with timeless elegance.

Our Abstract Series showcases three captivating designs:

- 4143: Greytale: Intricate patterns of cool greys transform surfaces into modern art.
- 4144: Brownacle: Rich Brown hues for modern look & aesthetics
- 4145: Ashangel: Soft ashen tones, brings a sense of Serenity to any space.
- Complementing these, our Wood Grain Series offers natural beauty:
- 4146: Pearl Autumn: Golden hues & subtle Pearl accents for natural elegance to interior.
- 4147: Pearl Mist: Subtle elegance to any space from modern kitchen to Tranquil Bedrooms.
- 4148: Pearl Spring: Delicate Wood Grains in soft warm hues creates light & airy feel to spaces.

Each pattern in our 1.25mm Synchronized Collections is carefully designed to ensure flawless integration and exceptional visual harmony in your projects. Perfect for residential, commercial, and hospitality settings, these versatile collections offer endless possibilities for crafting stunning, cohesive environments. Explore how our new collections can elevate your upcoming projects, and we can't wait to see the inspiring designs you create.



For any query, call us – Toll Free – 1800 233-1468

Visit us at : www.amulyamica.com or write us at crm@ amulyamica.com

(Search for SYNCHRONIZED LAMINATES on Google, you will find us at No.1).❑

Assessing the outlook for the wood industry in 2024

By Per Friis Knudsen, Director, Global Timber Asia

It is my optimistic yet realistic belief that we will return to a more normal market situation as in the pre-pandemic period at the end of Q3 or early/middle Q4 2024. While the market has improved in 2024, sales are still fluctuating on a monthly basis. Though there are still some challenges and setbacks to be expected, the industry's general development will become more stable. At the same time, I do not foresee any major developments concerning timber/lumber prices in 2024. Current prices are high across the board, as is the case for several months already. There is thus no indication that they will increase; the same, too, can be said about the likelihood for decreasing prices.

Balancing optimism with realism

Growing supply in the industry has been accompanied by returning demand. Orders are being placed again and -- although they might be smaller and frequent -- their numbers have stabilised. With both supply and demand coming along nicely, I do not suspect prices to change much for the rest of the year.

In April, I visited both the US and Europe and met with optimistic, happy, and reasonably enthusiastic people everywhere I went. Deals were made and good relations were maintained, and I left the region with goods to offer customers in South East Asia.

In Asia, however, I was met with caution and concern as my customers were waiting for incoming orders to be used in long-term productions. The uncertainty over how many orders will arrive has led many customers to be worried.

The main driver of the industry is still oak when it comes to flooring, door production, and furniture segments. While the focus previously had been on white oak, more and more customers are expressing an interest in red oak.

Red oak has many of the same properties as white oak in terms of appearance and smell. However, as it is also in great abundance, this has naturally also influenced its price. European red oak is one of the finest red oak for customers on the market, but in terms of volume, one must look to the US. With endless possibilities here, my advice would be to present red oak at the next buyers' meeting so as to offer a good range of oak furniture for an even better price and supply.

Furniture trade shows and exhibitions have also been off to a great start in 2024, especially in contrast to 2022 and 2023. In past years, while I was informed that there would be thousands of attendees to these trade events, I did not perceive that the exhibitions were well-visited. The same went for the wood material and machinery exhibitions. Nevertheless, I expect a lot more visitors to be present at key exhibitions this year, which started with Hanoi Wood in May. Hopefully, this will be a positive indicator for the remaining exhibitions to follow in the coming months, as Global Timber will be present at both TIWF in Bangkok and IFMAC in Jakarta.

Navigating the climate's impact on wood supply

The accuracy of my predictions could be skewed heavily by one factor: the climate. There have been frequent and intense weather events including heatwaves, floods, and droughts in the past five to eight years.

Most recently, Northern Europe and the northern parts of the US experienced its wettest winters, with warmer than normal temperatures in the summer. This is not a positive development for the wood industry. Trees and forests need frosty weather with subzero degrees (Celsius) as the cold temperatures kill most harmful insects and keep infestations low. With the current weather changes, bark beetles and other pests have severely damaged trees in the last few winters, leading to the logging of damaged timber.

In Northern Germany, for example, oak forests have faced pinholes due to bug infestations. It is more difficult now to find oak in these areas without a minimum number of pinholes allowed in the sapwood. These wet winters and dry summers have thus caused much disruption to the industry, together with wildfires, storms, and hurricanes.

Should these weather patterns be caused by climate change, then not all hope is lost, as global CO_2 emissions are projected to peak around 2025 and then fall again with many countries committing to net-zero policies.

However, I believe that many industrial countries cannot commit to such standards as they have developing economies, which depend heavily on developing the heavier industries. Consider how our clothes, cars, and phones are most likely not produced in a net-zero emission committed country – this does not in any way prevent us from importing them every time we need them.

Stay positive: A bright future ahead for the wood industry

All in all, I think the wood industry is moving in a healthy direction and it will continue for years to come. Prices will remain stable for 2024 and hopefully find a level where buyers and sellers can find common ground. Trends will continue to be centred around oak. And while I would personally love to see a species such as cherry find another chance in the furniture industry, its chances of doing so are quite slim. Nevertheless, I am optimistic in general for the wood industry, and will continue to do so in the near future.❑

Grenzebach optimises Pollmeier veneer drying line

A veneer dryer destroyed in a major fire at Pollmeier was to be repaired as soon as possible and extended by a stacker system with a veneer scanner. Despite the tight schedule and the limited available space, Grenzebach managed to furnish a production line matched to the customer's needs.

Grenzebach was able to repair a veneer dryer that had been damaged in a fire, and upgrade it into a production line of its own despite the limited space, the COVID-19 pandemic, and tight schedule (Image: Grenzebach)

For that purpose, the dryer was provided with a stacker system featuring a scanner technology without enlarging the footprint of the building. That allowed Pollmeier — an international producer of wood-based products — to minimise the downtime, and they can now use the production line independently of the stacker system of another dryer that was previously used jointly with the one damaged in the fire.

The Pollmeier group operates Europe's three highest-capacity and most modern hardwood sawmills. In 2021, a fire at its main factory in Creuzburg, Thuringia) — reportedly the world's only laminated veneer lumber mill that also processes hardwood veneer —damaged the only existing beech veneer dryer. Long production downtimes were imminent; hence the belt dryer was to be rebuilt as quickly as possible. Pollmeier also wished to run the dryer independently of the stacker system of another dryer it had previously used.

The Grenzebach experts were able to set up, on the same floor space as before, an integrated production line that can be operated independently of the stacker system used earlier. The damaged dryer was repaired for that purpose. The new line is completed by a high-performance stacker system with four lift tables and an integrated veneer scanner. Veneers in various sizes are now classified into the specified quality grades and stacked accordingly. The upstream inspection system scans the veneers in an automatic, non-contact process. Defects such as holes or cracks are detected, classified, and logged. Almost all line components, up to the handling equipment, are from Grenzebach and match. The circumstances around this project confronted the experienced Grenzebach team with several challenges, as the available floor space, which previously accommodated only the dryer, should now also be the location of a complete, independent stacker system. Moreover, the requested plant parameters changed repeatedly, even during construction, and the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in staff shortages and delivery bottlenecks. Thus, the planning was modified repeatedly, during construction. The software also developed and programmed in parallel with the line rebuild and was tailored to Pollmeier's specific requirements.

After 16 months of planning and construction, Grenzebach could hand over a complete line, providing Pollmeier Furnierwerkstoffe. The integration of the stacker system has created a production line that can be run independently of the stacker system used previously and adds to the flexibility of the veneer mill. In terms of quality, the Grenzebach veneer scanner detects and classifies defects in the veneers and sorts the sheets in accordance with the specified quality grades. Combined with the moisture detector — another device that has been integrated into the system — the quality can thus be determined. The veneers can then be further processed based on their quality, which markedly reduces waste in downstream production processes. With Grenzebach, Pollmeier Furnierwerkstoffe can consolidate and expand its position in the hardwood veneer market.❑

Building resilience in the timber and wood products trade industry amid extreme weather events

Through sustainable forest management, diversification of supply sources, infrastructure investments, and risk assessment and planning, businesses can enhance their capabilities to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events.

Extreme weather events disrupt supply chains, damage infrastructure, and affect timber resources. (Credit: Gerd Altmann from Pixabay).

Introduction

Extreme weather events pose significant challenges for businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry. From hurricanes and wildfires to floods and droughts, these events can disrupt supply chains, damage infrastructure, and affect the availability and quality of timber resources. In this article, we explore the impacts of extreme weather events on the timber industry and strategies for resilience.

Understanding extreme weather events

Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and droughts, are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change. These events can have devastating effects on forests, ecosystems, and communities, with implications for the timber and wood products trade industry. Understanding the risks posed by extreme weather events is essential for businesses to develop effective resilience strategies.

Impact on timber resources

Extreme weather events can affect timber resources in various ways:

1. Forest Damage: Hurricanes, wildfires, and floods can cause extensive damage to forests, including tree mortality, defoliation, and infrastructure destruction. These events can impact the availability and quality of timber resources for the wood products industry.
2. Supply Chain Disruptions: Extreme weather events can disrupt supply chains by damaging transportation infrastructure, such as roads and railways, and interrupting the flow of timber from forests to processing facilities and markets.
3. Quality Degradation: Floods and droughts can affect the quality of timber by altering soil moisture levels, leading to changes in wood density, strength, and susceptibility to decay.

Resilience strategies

To enhance resilience to extreme weather events, businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry can implement the following strategies:

1. Forest Management Practices: Adopting sustainable forest management practices, such as selective logging, reforestation, and ecosystem restoration, can help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events and promote forest resilience.
2. Diversification of Supply Sources: Diversifying timber supply sources by sourcing from multiple regions or forest types can reduce vulnerability to supply chain disruptions caused by localised extreme weather events.
3. Infrastructure Investments: Investing in resilient infrastructure, such as reinforced buildings, flood barriers, and transportation networks, can help protect timber processing facilities and transportation routes from damage during extreme weather events.
4. Risk Assessment and Planning: Conducting risk assessments and developing contingency plans for responding to extreme weather events can help businesses anticipate and mitigate potential impacts on operations, supply chains, and financial performance.

Collaboration and information sharing

Collaboration and information sharing among industry stakeholders, government agencies, and research institutions are essential for enhancing resilience to extreme weather events. By sharing best practices, data, and resources, businesses can collectively strengthen their ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme weather events.

Government policies and support

Government policies and support measures can also play a critical role in enhancing resilience to extreme weather events. Policies that promote sustainable forest management, invest in infrastructure resilience, and provide financial assistance for disaster recovery can help businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events.

Conclusion

In conclusion, extreme weather events present significant challenges for businesses in the timber and wood products trade industry, affecting timber resources, supply chains, and infrastructure. However, by implementing resilience strategies such as sustainable forest management, diversification of supply sources, infrastructure investments, and risk assessment and planning, businesses can enhance their ability to withstand and recover from the impacts of extreme weather events. Collaboration, information sharing, and government support are also essential for strengthening resilience and building a more sustainable and resilient timber industry in the face of climate change. *(Source: Timber trade Journal).*❑

Three key enablers for future value creation in woodworking as the focus topics of LIGNA 2025

Connectivity, sustainable production, and engineered wood are the three main topics of LIGNA 2025.

From 26-30 May 2025, LIGNA has announced its three focus topics for the 2025 edition, tackling three major challenges the industry is currently facing: complete digital networking, establishing the circular economy and developing intelligent products.

"With its focus topics of connectivity, sustainable production and engineered wood, LIGNA 2025 will bring together international solution providers for these three central challenges," said Stephanie Wagner, LIGNA project manager at Deutsche Messe.

"The exhibiting companies will demonstrate their efforts to advance the complete digital networking of all components of the value chain, aiming to create production paths for an ethical economy that produces intelligently designed wood products.

"In collaboration with the VDMA Woodworking Machinery Association, we have developed a close interlinking of our focus topics to simplify the localisation of our own requirements within a complex industry." In the past few years, for instance, those who have successfully implemented the digitalisation of specific process steps are now frequently confronted with the challenge of digitally integrating them into the entire value chain.

The increasingly important vertical and horizontal integration of in-house services is coming up against established systems with which interfaces need to be created. The newly developed focus topic LIGNA.CONNECTIVITY aims to provide solutions for all participants in the woodworking and wood processing value chain, regardless of their level of digitalisation.

"The concept of connectivity refers to the process of linking together various systems within the woodworking trade and the wood industry," explained Dr Bernhard Dirr, managing director of the VDMA Woodworking Machinery Association, Frankfurt am Main. "LIGNA 2025, with its focus on LIGNA. CONNECTIVITY, aims to find solutions for seamlessly connecting different systems within a value creation network, rather than mandating all participants to use the same system."

However the solutions for end-to-end connectivity have been configured and disruptive technologies such as AI and machine learning integrated, it is clear that processes must become more sustainable in order to be fit for the future.

Against this background, the new focus topic LIGNA. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION brings together economically viable strategies for the woodworking trade and the industry that prioritise environmental protection, resource conservation, and improved working conditions for future generations.

Particularly when it comes to timber construction, the industry is making the construction industry more climate-friendly with its products and machines, for example with production lines for industrial timber house construction in the factory. "The topic of sustainability is in LIGNA's DNA due to its focus on wood as a renewable material. Our exhibitors at LIGNA are showcasing their potential for sustainable production, from improved forest management to eco-friendly construction, all within the focus topic of LIGNA.SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION," said Wagner.

Developments that primarily benefit the latter area, the climate-friendly construction industry, will be represented by the third focus topic at LIGNA 2025. LIGNA.ENGINEERED WOOD encompasses the full range of intelligently designed wood products, which are transformed into composite materials for a variety of uses through the binding or fixing of wood strands, particles, fibers, veneers, or panels.

The focus topic of engineered wood ranges from CNC machines for processing wooden panels and beams to automated production lines for manufacturing cross-laminated timber (CLT) and other solid wood products, as well as robot systems for assembling wooden elements, handling technologies for finishing wood and software for the planning and production of mass-timber structures.

"As the world's leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing, LIGNA has a responsibility to provide a platform where the industry's current challenges can be turned into opportunities for sustainable growth," said Wagner. "With our three new focus topics, we are taking on this responsibility and looking forward to welcoming the international community of woodworking professionals to Hannover in May 2025."❑

Indian Furniture Market Buzz: Trends & Consumer Insights

Furniture Imports: India imports furniture from over 44 countries around the world with total furniture imports expected to cross $ 1 billion by 2023-24.

Industry Growth: World Bank states that India's organized furniture industry is expected to grow 20% p.a.

Residential Furniture Market: Home furniture comprises 60% of the total furniture market, accounting for ~$22.92 billion (2024) and expected to grow at 10.6% CAGR over 2024-2029.

Online Furniture Market: The online furniture sector is expected to witness a three-fold increase in shoppers by 2026, with an expected 1.8 fold increase in yearly expenditure per customer. The online furniture business is predicted to expand 27% CAGR and estimated to reach $1.92 billion by 2025 while India's overall online furniture and home market share is expected to reach $40 billion by 2026.

India Market Size: In 2022, the furniture market touched $23.12 billion and is expected to reach $37.72 billion by 2026-end growing at 13.37% CAGR from 2020-2026. India is the 4th largest consuming country and 14th largest furniture market in the world.

Short Replacement Cycles: Furniture replacement cycle are expected to come down to 5-7 years from the current 8-10 years as the time frame of home renovations have also decreased over the years.

Home Furniture Analysis: In the overall Home Décor category, furniture comprises 40-50%. Larger items like Sofa, beds, etc., comprise 25% and the rest are small furniture items like bar tables, coffee tables, chairs, stools, etc.

Office Furniture Analysis: The Indian office furniture market was valued at $ 4 billion in 2023 with office chairs and desks, comprising 60% of sales, driven by demand for comfort and adaptability, especially with ergonomic and height adjustable options. Consumers are prioritizing comfort, durability and eco-friendliness, favouring sustainable materials, reflecting a growing trend of increasingly environmentally conscious businesses.

Sunrise Industry: India's $2 billion furniture rental industry has surged, occupying ~ 4.9% of market share and expected to increase by 26% CAGR between 2020 and 2025.

Work from Home: Work from home coupled with media exposure opened the Indian mind in furniture designs. The booming work from furniture market is expected to touch $3.49 billion by 2026.

Huge Untapped Potential: A low per capita furniture spend of $5 signifies a vast market waiting to be explored.

The Indian furniture market is in transformative phase, adapting to trends and the shifting consumer preferences. Growth of E-commerce, sustainability considerations, prominence of minimalist designs and the rise of smart furniture are reshaping the industry. To thrive in this dynamic environment, Indian furniture manufacturers and retailers must adapt to global trends, prioritize innovation, and align strategies with the changing demands of the Indian consumer base. *(Source: Furniture+Design Market Place).*❑

Greenply gets into plantation drive to ease raw material supply

Greenply Industries, one of the leading players in the country's wood panel industry, is aiming to strengthen its plantation driven in different states including Nagaland, West Bengal and Gujarat to ensure uninterrupted supply of raw materials for its production units across the country.

The eco restoration and plantation drive of the company, known as Green Rise project, had started in the country in 2014, and it is now spread over 52,983 acres of land where more than 42 million saplings have been planted so far.

JK Jain, vice president, projects, Greenply, told TOI, "Our target is to plant 50 million saplings by 2025, bring more than 60,000 acres of land under our green drive. We have set the goal to become a zero waste company and we are opting waste water management across our manufacturing plants in the country. Timber constitutes about 70% of raw materials needed for the manufacturing of our products. So, we are promoting plantation on marginal and degraded lands for sourcing of raw materials as well as conservation of natural resources."

In keeping with the company's eco forestry practice, it has engaged local communities to maintain and nourish trees for five years before they are cut for use in plywood manufacturing units. "If we cut one lakh trees, we ensure there are three or four lakh trees still standing tall," Jain said.

At Tizit village in Mon district of Nagaland, more than 15 saplings have been planted in over 3,300 acres of land. "In Nagaland, we started the plantation drive in 2014. While we have planted some local plants such as eucalyptus, neem and khokan, we have also developed some species as well in consultation with Rain Forest Research Institute. We encourage the large scale plantation of those species that can be used for manufacturing of our products. Our company has attained Forest Management Certification from Forest Stewardship Council for the plantation unit in Nagaland. About 7,475 local farmers are part of the project," Jain said

Apart from Nagaland, Greenply is also undertaking its plantation drives at Kriparampur of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal, Baripada in Odisha and Bamanbore in Gujarat.

Greenply is coming up with another plantation project in an upcoming medium density-fibreboard MDF unit in Vadodara.❑

Campus Placement notification for 34th batch of PG Diploma Course in Wood & Panel Product Technology

Institute of Wood Science & Technology (IWST) Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education
(Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India)

IPIRTI Campus, P.B. No.2273, (Behind Peenya Metro Station), HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road, P.O. Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore-560 022

Ph.: 080-30534000,30534001,30534019,30534041,30534037,30534005

NOTIFICATION FOR CAMPUS INTERVIEW FROM 23rd TO 27th OF SEPTEMBER, 2024

IWST is a premier National Research & Training Institute in the field of plywood and panel products with excellent laboratory and pilot plant facilities. The Institute has been meeting the human resource needs of the growing plywood and panel product industries for various positions such as Production Managers, Quality Control Managers, Marketing Managers, Team Leaders, and Chemists. IWST flagship one-year **PG diploma course in WOOD AND PANEL PRODUCTS TECHNOLOGY.**

The campus interviews for the successful trainees of the 34th Batch Campus interviews scheduled to take place from **23rd to 27th of September 2024 at IWST (IPIRTI Campus).** Interested industries or organizations are invited to **send a confirmation email, along with their preferred dates** for participation at dir_iwst@icfre.org, director.iwst@gmail.com, so that we can make the necessary arrangements. Any corrigendum to the above notification, student's biodata, and other information will be available at https://iwst.icfre.gov.in/. For further information or clarification please contact Ms. Sujatha D, Officer In-charge PGDC (Phone: 080-30534005; Email: sujathad@icfre.org) and Dr. Manish Ranjan, Course Director (Tel. No. 080-30534037, E-mail: ranjanm@icfre.org).

In-charge Director
IWST, Bangalore

Expanding Non-traditional Market, Furniture Industry Booked IDR 17 Billion Commitment in India

The Ministry of Industry (Kemenperin) continues to strive to expand non-traditional markets for Indonesian furniture products. This industrial sub-sector has high added value and actively provides a positive impact on the Indonesian economy.

One of the efforts to open non-traditional markets is through active participation in the IndexPlus Delhi 2024 Exhibition, the leading and largest international platform in India, specifically for interiors, architecture and design which took take place on 9-11 August 2024. “The value of business commitments successfully recorded from Indonesia’s participation in the exhibition is IDR 17 billion,” said the Director General of Agro Industry at the Ministry of Industry, Putu Juli Ardika in Jakarta.

Participation in the Indonesia Furniture Pavilion was represented by six collaborative pairs of furniture companies and designers, including Cocoon Asia and Handyanto Hardian, Chakra Naga Furniture and Chyntia Margareth, Wisanka and Suskariyanto, Dekor Asia Jayakarya and Gege Noby, Satori Rattan and Zulyo Kumara and Nafarrel Furniture and Vincentius Aldi Masella.

In order to increase market control and respond to furniture industry trends, the government has developed a strategy that focuses on five things, namely facilitating the availability of raw materials, facilitating the availability of skilled human resources, facilitating market development and strengthening market reference research, facilitating increased productivity, capacity, and product quality, as well as facilitating a conducive business climate and increasing investment.

In order to create a conducive business climate for furniture industry players, the government has also issued a policy of providing tax incentive facilities in the form of tax allowances, as well as facilitating procedures for exporting downstream products and importing raw materials or auxiliary materials. “All of these programs are a form of government support so that the domestic industry can be sovereign, advanced, and competitive,” Putu explained.

The gross domestic product (GDP) growth of the furniture industry in the first semester of 2024 was recorded at 0.50 percent. This is good news, considering that in the last 2 years this industry has experienced contraction.

“In 2022, the furniture industry growth fell to 1.99%, then in 2023 it fell to 2.04 percent. However, in the first semester of 2024, it experienced a positive increase of 0.50%. Although prone to fluctuations, in 2021, the furniture industry managed to carve out growth of up to 8.16%,” said Putu.

In semester I - 2024, furniture industry products including metal and plastic furniture, contributed 1.1% to non-oil and gas GDP, with an export performance value reaching USD1.02 billion.

Based on Expert Market Research data, the global furniture market value in 2023 was recorded at USD629 billion, and in 2024 it is projected to grow by 5%. This condition opens up opportunities for the Indonesian furniture industry to penetrate the global market, one of which is India.

In his speech when opening the Indonesia Furniture Pavilion at the IndexPlus exhibition last Friday (9/8), the Expert Staff of the Minister of Industry for Strengthening Domestic Industrial Capabilities, Ignatius Warsito explained that India has a fairly large and promising market potential. Based on data submitted by IndexPlus, the Indian consumer market has great potential which is predicted to be the third largest in the world in 2027. In addition, the percentage of the Indian population living in urban areas has now increased by 37% and continues to grow, so that the development of urban housing and hospitality continues to be carried out. Specifically, the Indian furniture market has reached USD41 billion, making it the fourth largest furniture consumer in the world.

The furniture market is also supported by the recovery of tourism and hospitality businesses, as well as housing and office needs. The increasing online shopping habits that are also supported by the use of industry 4.0-based technology, the increasing demand for environmentally friendly furniture, and the increasing need for functional furniture, ergonomic design, and customized are also predicted to influence furniture market trends.

“We hope that the large market potential and dynamic furniture market trends can attract the attention of all furniture industry players, including furniture designers, who play a major role in creating marketable furniture design trends,” concluded Warsito.❑

Wood Panel Price Index Climbs in India

The annual rate of inflation based on the India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) was 3.36 percent in June 2024. The positive rate of inflation was primarily due to increase in prices of food, manufactured food products, crude petroleum and natural gas, mineral oils and other manufacturing. The index increased to 141.9 in June 2024 up from 141.7 for May, 2024. Out of the 22 NIC two-digit groups for manufactured products, 8 groups witnessed an increase in prices, 10 groups witnessed a decrease in prices and 4 groups witnessed no change in prices.

The price index for wood panels continued to climb in June on the back of firm demand. The price index for wood veneers moved a little higher while the index for sawnwood fell slightly.

Some of the groups that recorded decreases in prices were basic metals, other non-metallic mineral products, fabricated metal products, pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products, machinery and equipment.❑

Kirov Region Expands Plywood Exports to India by 20% in 2024

Kirov Region, Russia: The Kirov Region has significantly increased its supply of birch plywood to India, marking a 20% growth in exports compared to the same period last year.

Since the beginning of 2024, a total of 1.66 thousand cubic meters of birch plywood has been shipped to India, reflecting the strong demand for high-quality timber products from Russia in the Indian market. On August 1, 2024 alone, an impressive 1.13 thousand cubic meters of plywood, crafted from the renowned Vyatka wood, were dispatched to India. This shipment underscores the Kirov Region's growing role as a key supplier of premium plywood to global markets.

The expansion into the Indian market is part of a broader strategy by the Kirov Region's timber industry to diversify its export destinations. In addition to India, 2024 has seen the region begin supplying plywood to the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon for the first time. These new partnerships highlight the region's increasing influence and competitiveness in the global plywood market.

For years, the Kirov Region has maintained strong export relationships with several countries, including Kazakhstan, Turkey, China, and Egypt. The longstanding cooperation with these nations is a testament to the consistent quality and reliability of the region's timber products. The Office of Rosselkhoznadzor, responsible for overseeing the export quality standards, has confirmed the seamless and complaint-free supply of plywood from the Kirov Region to its international partners, further solidifying the region's reputation as a trusted source of timber. As the demand for sustainable and high-quality building materials continues to rise, the Kirov Region is well-positioned to meet the needs of its growing international clientele.❑

Cost of imported plywood and panels increased by 10-12 percent

The Indian market is once again witnessing turmoil due to sea freight and global logistics issues. As a result, the Indian plywood market is witnessing a supply shortage from Vietnam due to rising container and logistics delays. Container prices have recorded a hike of $2500, which is the sharpest jump since Covid 2020. The rise in imported plywood prices is largely due to global chemical prices as well as the rise in sea freight. The landed price of 16mm imported plywood in Delhi has seen a hike of 10-12% during the last week of May. However, the same product in the southern Indian market is witnessing a price hike of 8%.

A similar impact is being seen on MDF as material is not available for loading at the old rates. Since the MDF sector is witnessing tough competition, the impact of rising prices is yet to be seen, but it has started showing in plywood and imported calibrated ply. Plywood importers have reported a hike of Rs 5.50-6.50 per sq ft on 18 mm plywood. It is also expected that the stock of plywood in the market is very low, so the markets will open up rapidly after the formation of the new government.

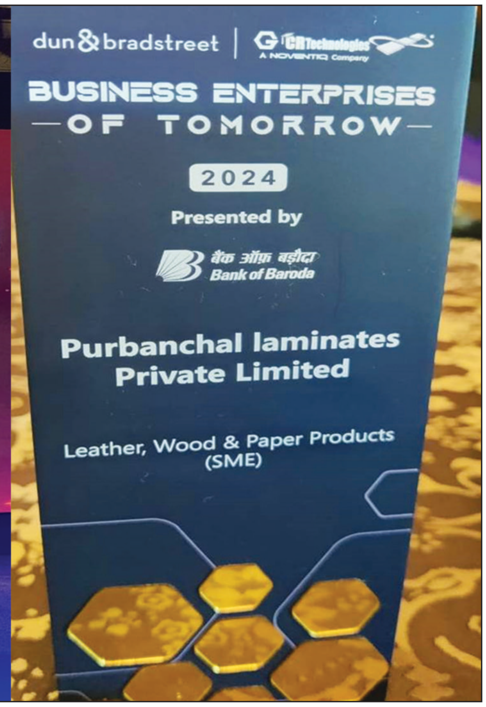
On one hand, the increased prices of imported panels have given relief to Indian producers as this change provides them relief and a level playing field, but on the other hand, the cost of imported core veneers has also increased by 20 paise per mm.

Imported particle board is also expensive, due to which Indian producers are gearing up for a price hike. The particle board segment has already been under pressure for months.

Dealer inquiries from Indian companies have once again increased in recent weeks. Plywood manufacturers from Bareilly, Yamunanagar, Visakhapatnam, Rajasthan and Gujarat reported that demand for calibrated 16 mm is also rising from metros.

It is also reported that sea freight and supply chain are not going to ease for the next 3-4 months until there is a resolution to the global turmoil.❑

Amulya Mica has won Dun & Bradstreet's Business Excellence Award (SME) 2024 - Business Enterprises Tomorrow 2024



We are extremely delighted to inform you that Purbanchal laminates Pvt. Ltd. "Amulya Mica" has been honoured Dun & Bradstreet's Business Excellence Award (SME) 2024 -Business Enterprises Tomorrow 2024 in the category of Leather, Wood & Paper products (SME). Mr. Surendra Tharad, VP-Sales (North) & Mr. Zubair Akhtar, DGM Delhi Branch accepted the award on behalf of the company from Mrs. Mercy Epao, Joint Secretary (SME) at Ministry of SME, Govt. of India on 21st June/2024 at Taj Palace. This recognition was presented during the 'Dun & Bradstreet-G7 Cr technologies Business Enterprises of Tomorrow Summit 2024' in the presence of government officials, industry leaders, and executives from various companies.

Dun & Bradstreet is a leading global provider of B2B data, insights and AI-driven platforms that help organizations around the world grow and thrive. Dun & Bradstreet's Data Cloud, which comprises of more than 500 million records, delivers insights and solutions that enable customers to increase revenue, increase margins, build stronger relationships, and maintain compliance in a dynamic environment.

Dun & Bradstreet India has recognized the winners of the Business Excellence Award Winner 2024. These winners are distinguished in their respective industries for setting benchmarks in innovation, quality, customer focus, sustainable growth, and profitability.

Commenting on this great achievement, Mr. Rakesh Agarwal, MD Amulya Mica, expressed his joy and described it as another noteworthy accomplishment for Amulya Mica, accentuating the Group's value preposition. Furthermore, Mr.Agarwal also extended heartfelt gratitude to his team, friends, relatives, associates, channel partners, and patrons for their unwavering support throughout his journey with Amulya Group.❑

Logistics cost will be below 9% of GDP by April next year, says Gadkari

However, according to quick estimates of economic think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the logistics cost in India ranged from 7.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent of GDP

Addressing an event here, Gadkari further said the country's exports will also increase when the logistics cost comes down to single digit.

India's logistics cost will come down to 9 per cent of GDP by April next year, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said. Addressing an event here, Gadkari further said the country's exports will also increase when the logistics cost comes down to single digit. "Our logistics cost now is 16 per cent...It will come down to 9 per cent by April next year," he said.

However, according to quick estimates of economic think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the logistics cost in India ranged from 7.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent of GDP in 2021-22.

The road transport and highways minister noted that Indian economy needs to create more jobs.

While noting that earlier governments did not give enough attention to rural sector, he said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government is giving more priority to the agriculture sector.

"We need to increase our agriculture growth...We need to increase per capita income in rural areas," Gadkari said.

The minister noted that India is the fastest growing major economy, and the government is working hard to make it the third largest economy in the world. Currently, India is the fifth largest economy globally.❑

Vietnam export of wood and wood products surge 24% by mid-August, but hitting annual target remains difficult

Recent data from Vietnam's General Department of Customs have revealed that wood and wood products exports reached US$9.5bn by mid-August, up 24% year-on-year. Wood products clocked in $6.5bn, which is 68% of the total wood and wood products exports.

The US continues to be Vietnam's largest export market, with $4.88bn worth of exports from January to mid-August, increasing by 25.9% year-on-year.

This is followed by China with $1.2bn, Japan with $961m, South Korea with $452m, Canada with $133m, and the UK reaching $124m.

Malaysia imported $90.7m worth of wood and wood products from Vietnam, up 12.8% year-on-year. According to VietnamNet, this is the only South East Asian market to rank among Vietnam's top 10 export markets.

All these suggest that Vietnam's wood and wood products market is recovering compared to last year, but even so, hitting the target of $15.2bn by the end of the year remains tough, according to Tran Quang Bao, Director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Department of Forestry.

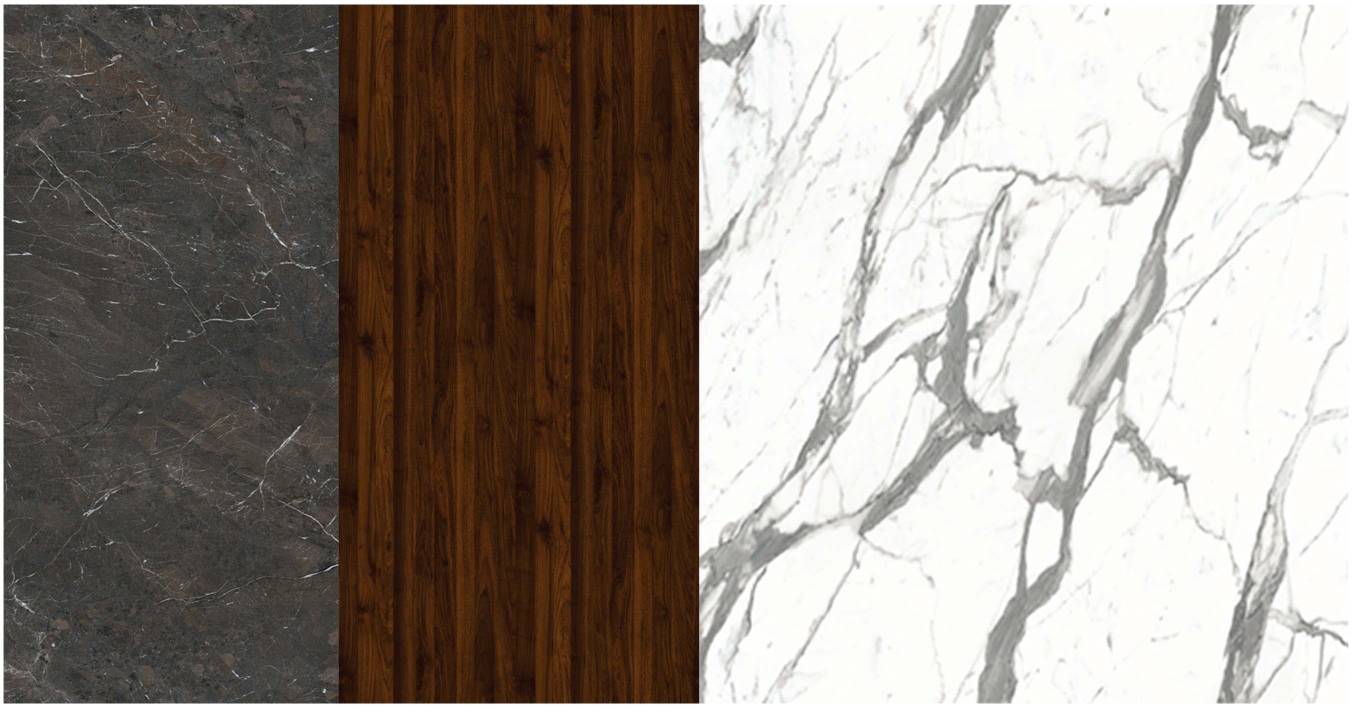
Global economic uncertainties, political conflicts, rising shipping costs and delayed tax refunds hinder progress.

The new EU Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR) will also come into effect soon, which pose further challenges to Vietnamese enterprises.

Meanwhile, the US continues to come down harsh on anti-dumping measures on Vietnam, and South Korea and Japan have reportedly introduced measures that increase costs and risks for Vietnamese exporters.

Source: VietnamNet, VietnamPlus.❑

Amulya Cladding



Amulya Cladding is a high-quality construction product which is primarily used for long term façade cladding and exterior applications with 10 years warranty.

Amulya Cladding is made as per EN 438-6 (Resistance against extreme climatic condition) from superior kraft paper, selected imported European decorative paper with high color retention property, superior UV technology & Fire resistance quality and Pure Phenolic Resin. Hardened Resin provides effective weather protection which makes it capable of withstanding erosion from natural elements. It comes with high UV resistance which makes it ideal for exterior & cladding façade.

Amulya Cladding stands out as an ideal choice for buildings in need of ventilated facades. With its durability and sustainability, along with effortless machining and installation, it offers a wide range of decorative options. It also provides a layer of protection, ensuring the building's longevity and safeguarding it against environmental elements. By enhancing the property's aesthetic appeal, Amulya Cladding contributes to boosting its overall value.

Amulya Cladding is found in a wide range of thickness. The range is available in 6mm, 8 mm, 10 mm, 12 mm and up to 15mm thickness and in standard size of 1220mmx2440mm.

Amulya Cladding is certified by EPH-Lab Germany, National Test House, Kolkata & Thomas Bell Wright International Consultants Dubai. Recently it is tested and certified by Lapi laboratorio.

Amulya Cladding finds application in large corporate buildings, residential complexes, CPWD offices, as well as central and state government properties.

We'd love for you to take a look at our latest designs.

LAPI

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Reg. 305/2011
Notified Body N°0987

ATTESTAZIONE DI CLASSIFICAZIONE / *CLASSIFICATION ASSESSMENT*
ACL/2427/23/CPR/---

Quando applicabile il presente documento viene emesso in ottemperanza al Regolamento UE 305/2011 e Regolamento n.765 del 9 Marzo 2011 e in relazione alle leggi, regolamenti e procedimenti amministrativa degli Stati Membri concernenti i prodotti da costruzione, si stabilisce che:
When applicable the following document has been issued in compliance with the Regulation UE 305/2011 and Regulation n.765 of 9 March 2011 on the approximation of law, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to the construction products, it has been stated that the construction product :

RAPPORTO DI CLASSIFICAZIONE DI REAZIONE AL FUOCO / *REACTION TO FIRE CLASSIFICATION REPORT*
N°. 2427.0DC0050/23

CLASSIFICAZIONE RICHIESTA DA / *Classification on behalf of*
PURBANCHAL LAMINATES PVT. LTD.
Survey No: 340, Village: Bhimasar, Taluka: Anjar District: Kutch - 370110 Gujarat (India)

LAPI SPA - LABORATORIO PREVENZIONE INCENDI N. 0987

DENOMINAZIONE COMMERCIALE DEL MATERIALE / *Trade name of the material*
Exterior Grade Compact Laminate

SPESSORE E PESO NOMINALE DEL MATERIALE / *Nominal thickness and weight of the material*
6.0 mm - 8.8 kg/m^2 (Dens.: 1400 kg/m^3)

DESCRIZIONE DEL MATERIALE / *Description of the material*
Pannello in HPL (laminato ad alta pressione) di colore legno su entrambi i lati.
HPL (High Pressure Laminate) panel of wood coloured on both sides.

METODI DI PROVA / *Test methods* : **UNI EN ISO 11925-2: 2020** and **UNI EN 13823: 2020**

STANDARD DI PRODOTTO / *Product Standard* : N/A

METODO DI CLASSIFICAZIONE / *Classification standard* : **UNI EN 13501-1: 2019**
Fire classification of construction products and building elements - Part 1: Classification using test data from reaction to fire tests
(Classificazione al fuoco di prodotti ed elementi da costruzione - Parte 1: Classificazione sulla base dei dati di prove di reazione al fuoco)

CLASSIFICAZIONE / *CLASSIFICATION*
B - s2, d0

La classificazione sopra riportata **è valida per il prodotto sottoposto a prova** e per la seguente applicazione effettiva: **rivestimento di parete / soffitto provato in configurazione "per uso esterno" secondo EN 438-7 punto B.3 con isolante standard secondo EN 438-7 punto B.2. Lato esposto: indifferente.**
Il Laboratorio non è stato coinvolto in nessuna attività di campionamento.
*The above reported classification **is valid for the product tested** and for the following actual end use:*
wall / ceiling covering, tested in configuration for "exterior grade" according to EN 438-7 point B.3 with standard insulation according to EN 438-7 point B.2. Side exposed: either.
The Laboratory has not been involved in any sampling activity.

Prato, 23/01/2024	Il Responsabile Certificazione *The Certification Manager* David Borsini	Il Direttore del Laboratorio *The Director of the Laboratory* Luca Ermini
Valid until: 22/01/2029		

Nota: Il presente documento perderà di validità a seguito di qualsiasi variazione inerente i componenti dei materiali, la denominazione commerciale, i dati del Richiedente, le modalità e/o luogo di produzione, aggiornamento normativo, ecc. Sarà cura dell'intestatario richiedere un aggiornamento del documento. Infine, si ricorda che se non esplicitamente indicato nello Standard di Prodotto a cui le prove si riferiscono i Rapporti di Prova non hanno scadenza. Il Laboratorio richiedere al rinnovo dalla Attestazione una verifica sperimentale per la conferma dei risultati ottenuti.
***Note:** This document will lose validity as a result of any changes regarding the components of the materials, the trade name, the data of the Sponsor, mode and/or place of production, regulation updates, an so on. It will be care of the Applicant to require an update of the document. Please note that if not explicitly stated in the Product Standard to which the tests relate the Test Reports do not expire. The Laboratory may request at the renewal of the Attestation a verification to confirm the results obtained.*

egolf

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This document has to be read in conjunction with the Test Reports, for the description of the product and for every other detail. This document does not represent type approval or certification of the product neither declaration of compliance, that is exclusively under the responsibility of the Manufacturer or Sponsor.

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For more information please visit website www.amulyamica.com or call at Toll-free no 1800 233 1468.❑

MMFA publishes its first environmental product declaration for vinyl-HDF floor covering

The Multilayer Modular Flooring Association (MMFA) has published its first environmental product declaration (EPD) for MMFA category wood products — vinyl-high-density fibreboard (HDF) floor covering. The EPD, valid from 4 June 2024-3 June 2029, was verified by the German IBU Institute and allows members to communicate on the environmental performance, functional and technical characteristics of Vinyl-HDF floor covering with a thickness range from 9.1-10mm.

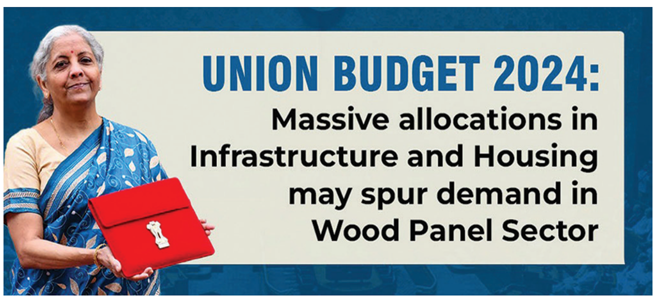
The EPD data is based upon production during 2022 in Europe, supplied by four member companies of MMFA. The declaration provides information on product definition, application, technical and construction data, manufacturing process, packaging, reuse phase, disposal and more. This gives a comprehensive overview of Vinyl-HDF floor covering and its environmental impact during its whole lifecycle.

"I would like to thank all the members who contributed data to the project, as well as Dr Rico Emmler and technical committee convenor Sebastian Wendel for the technical coordination," MMFA president Jan Dossche of US Floors International said. "This is a new step for MMFA in terms of product transparency and our sustainability commitments."

EPDs aim to advance the work of MMFA on commitments to ensure the sustainability of the sector. The declarations serve to measure and reduce the environmental footprint of the products, allowing for more transparency for actors across the supply chain. For instance, the EPD shows that the vinyl-HDF flooring does not aggravate global warming and water deprivation. MMFA continues its work on EPDs, with preparatory work for a stone plastic composite (SPC) floor covering EPD expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Sebastian Wendel, MMFA vice-president, added: "Launching MMFA's first EPD was one of the core goals of my mandate as the convenor of the technical committee. We are looking forward to seeing it bring tangible benefits to consumers, who will now have a better insight into the lifecycle assessment of MMFA category wood products. This will allow them to make greener, more informed choices."❑

Union Budget 2024: Massive Allocations in Infrastructure and Housing May Spur Demand in Wood Panel Sector



As per Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Indian economy is on a strong wicket and stable footing, demonstrating resilience in the face of geopolitical challenges. Budget is themed on improving access to physical, social and digital infrastructure along with skilling the workforce. The finance minister announced a flurry of measures for boosting the infrastructure, Housing and MSME in addition to following announcements.

FM allocates ₹11.1 lakh crore for Infrastructure with 12 industrial parks sanctioned under National Industrial Corridor Development Programme. Investment-ready "plug and play" industrial parks to be developed in or near 100 cities.

2 crore more houses to be taken up in next five years under PM Awas Yojana (Grameen).

The government also proposed a central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore for urban housing over the next five years as well as an interest subsidy scheme to facilitate loans at affordable rates for urban housing works.

E-Commerce Export Hubs to be set up in PPP mode to enable MSMEs and traditional artisans to sell their products in international markets.

The minister enhanced the limit for loans under the government's Mudra scheme to Rs 20 lakh from Rs 10 lakh to boost credit access for micro enterprises.

Draft of 'Green Credit Programme (GCP)' implementation was first announced in the 2023-24 Union Budget with a view to promote activities for increasing the green cover across the country through tree plantation and related activities.

The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) shall be the administrator of the programme which will develop guidelines, processes and procedures for implementation of the programme.❑

Furniture and Fittings Skill Council announces major skill development projects

The Furniture and Fittings Skill Council (FFSC) introduced new projects to boost industry growth and skills, and the opening of FFSC Centre of Excellence (COE) in Hyderabad by the Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Jayant Chaudhary.

This COE, created through a partnership with the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) and industry partners, is a big step forward for skill development in the sector, said Trishaljit Sethi, Director General of Training (DGT).

Jayant Chaudhary praised the FFSC's unique approach and the important role of the Skill Ambassadors and Regional Skill Chapters in creating a strong skill ecosystem. He also launched the 'One Nation One Industry – Grow with #PowerOfSkills' campaign, which aims to expand FFSC's skill development efforts and set up Regional Skill Chapters across the country.

Venkataramana Gorti, Managing Director and Country Head of HOMAG became the new Chairperson of FFSC, while Nand Kishor Mistry, CEO of Swati Interiors, took on the role of Co-chairperson.

Rahul Mehta, CEO of FFSC, said, "Over the past four years, the FFSC has achieved remarkable growth, expanding our member base from around 40 to over 220, and engaging more than 1,500 companies, associations and academia as Skill Ambassadors."❑

China's timber imports fall in the first half of 2024

According to data recently released by China's General Administration of Customs, China imported 32.769 million cubic metres of timber in the first half of the year, down 5.3 per cent compared with the same period last year. The trade value was $6.85 billion, down 5.1 per cent year-on-year. Of this, the volume of timber imported in June 2024 was 4,919,000 cubic metres and the value of trade was US$1.08 billion. Compared to 5.99 million cubic metres in May 2024, this represents a 17.8 per cent drop from the previous year and a 13.7 per cent drop in trade value. China's June 2024 sawn timber imports (2.695 million cubic metres) were 30 percent lower than the same period last year (3.837 million cubic metres). Birch sawn timber (from Russia) decreased by 41 percent to 79.6 thousand cubic metres, and New Zealand radiata pine, which currently accounts for 46 percent of log imports, decreased by 27 percent from 1.71 million cubic metres to 1.255 million cubic metres.❑

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