

## **The International Furniture Fair Singapore 2004/21st ASEAN Furniture Golden Week for the International Furniture Industry, Furniture and Singapore 's MICE industry**

The little boy sitting at his brand new school desk and chair in India. The elderly couple settles down on their comfortable sofa to watch television in Australia. The CEO of a Fortune 500 multinational at his designer chair in New York. They could all be using furniture products displayed at the International Furniture Fair Singapore 2004, held in conjunction with the 21st ASEAN Furniture Show (IFFS/AFS 2004), as buyers from all over the world descend upon the show to source for a very wide variety of furniture and furnishing products.

IFFS/AFS 2004, organised by the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), is an icon event that is Asia's premier furniture trade show, as well as Singapore's second largest annual international trade exhibition. With more than 25,000 pieces of furniture and furnishing products on display, the show is an ideal sourcing venue for the world's furniture buyers. The organisers are expecting more than 17,000 trade visitors from about 100 countries.

With a reputation as a strategic conduit for Asian players to venture globally whilst international players tap the vast potential of Asia, the fair boasts 450 exhibitors from 29 countries showcasing the very latest in furniture and furnishing products.

The trade event is also recognised by the member countries of the ASEAN Furniture Industries Council as an important platform to showcase the ASEAN countries' products to the world's furniture players. Seven ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, will be occupying more than two halls of the Singapore Expo, entrenching the show's reputation as having the widest range of quality ASEAN furniture and products.

IFFS/AFS 2004 has 11 countries increasing their participation by 27 percent over IFFS/AFS 2003, taking up a combined gross space of 40,180 square metres. These countries include Australia, Belgium, China, France, Hong Kong, India, Netherlands, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States of America.

In addition, the fair has exhibitors from Japan, New Zealand and Sweden making their reappearance at the show, while Lebanon and Ireland are new countries exhibiting for the first time. Together, these five countries occupy 1,930 sqm of gross space.

Besides these countries, visitors can view quality products from 13 other countries, namely Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Vietnam, which collectively occupy a total of 8,250 square metres of gross space.

The fair occupies five halls at the Singapore Expo, with a total floor space of 50,360 square metres.

"This show's importance lies in the fact that it is a world-class event and an ideal business platform for the world's furniture players," said Mr James Koh, President, SFIC. "For Singapore's furniture industry, the show is an annual proving ground for our home-grown local furniture manufacturers, and I am pleased to note that time and time again, Singaporean companies have shown that they can compete against the best in the world of furniture manufacturers," Mr Koh added.

Singapore's Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions industry is experiencing its golden two weeks, with the IFFS/AFS 2004 and the Asian Aerospace held consecutively. The IFFS/AFS 2004 alone is expected to pump SGD 45 million into the local economy. "The event is very important not only for the furniture industry players, but it is also a major event eagerly awaited by Singapore's hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related companies," said Mr Lim Neo Chian, Deputy Chairman & Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board.

In fact, at Oriental Hotel Singapore, the occupancy rate will hit a high of 100 percent during the period 29 Feb to 4 March, because of IFFS/AFS 2004.

Assistant Managing Director of Economic Development Board (EDB), Mr Tan Chek Ming said, "Congratulations to the SFIC on the successful launch of the 2004 International Furniture Fair. This event represents an important stepping stone in the Singapore furniture industry's bid to become an internationally renowned furniture hub known for its quality and design excellence. EDB is pleased to partner with the SFIC

and key industry players to develop the furniture business here in Singapore and groom it into a reputable player in the global market.”

This year’s fair also plays an important role in featuring and promoting furniture design, as the SFIC will be holding the prestigious Furniture Design Award 2004, the 2nd Furniture Design Forum, and the Design Gallery. “We cannot over emphasise the role of design in the furniture business. Design must be an integral part of the business model and companies must embrace design as a critical success factor. SFIC is organising these design-related events at IFFS/AFS 2004 so that more of our industry peers will believe in, and use, design as a strategic competitive tool,” said Mr Koh.

With “New Asia” as its theme, the Furniture Design Award 2004 received a total of 334 entries, a 60% increase over the last event. The Students Category saw an overwhelming 72% increase in entries, with the main bulk of the 224 entries coming from students of Temasek Polytechnic, National University of Singapore, LaSalle SIA, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, the Nanyang and Singapore Polytechnics, Inspiration Design School and Raffles LaSalle. In addition, there was a very encouraging six-fold increase in entries received from secondary schools.

The Young Designers Category was extended from ASEAN to the Asia Pacific countries this year. A total of 71 entries, a 6% increase over last year, came from Australia, China, Singapore and Thailand.

The FDA 2004 has been extended to include international entries. Under the inaugural Open Category, which is open to professional design talents, the organizers were delighted to attract 19 regional and international design talents from America, Indonesia, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to participate in the awards.

The participants in this competition have to pay personal attention to technical details as well as sensitivity to users and clients. For some, it is their fourth time participating in the event, which serves as a testament of their passion and unwavering dedication to this mind-searching area of work.

The 2nd Furniture Design Forum will act as a design information centre, which communicates in versatile ways of the strengths and importance of design. Four distinguished speakers, namely Swedish designer from IKEA Lars Engman, Furniture Designer-maker Philip Koomen from the United Kingdom, Christophe Pillet, an internationally renowned French Designer, and Singapore’s own homegrown talent, Andrew Pang, will share their insights and views at the Forum.

IFFS/AFS 2004 will also include the inaugural Design Gallery. While humble in size, with six specially selected design-led companies, the Design Gallery is filled with ready-for-market, designer furniture products. The aim of the Design Gallery is to encourage other furniture companies to adopt similar design-led business models.

Finally, at IFFS/AFS 2004, SFIC will unveil plans to further enhance its show’s brand image, by announcing a new incisive IFFS/AFS logo. Mr Koh says, ‘The show is already known internationally as a world-class, business-oriented event that is a true “East-Meets-West” platform for the industry. We want to build on this positive image to emphasise our customer- focused approach as well. We believe that this will strengthen the brand image of IFFS/AFS and lead to further growth in visitors and exhibitor participation.’

#### **About Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC)**

Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC) was established in 1981 as the official representative body of Singapore’s furniture industry. It currently represents 95% of furniture manufacturers in Singapore, 65% of whom have subsidiary manufacturing plants in the region; including Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Myanmar. Its primary roles include promoting the interests of its members and the Singapore furniture industry, facilitating members’ exposure to the world market, creating more entrepreneurs through human resource development, developing local talents, creating more leading-edge and award-winning designs by organising competitions such as the annual Furniture Design Award, forging strategic partnerships with government- and trade-related agencies, harnessing technology and knowledge for growth through the use of information technology.

#### **About International Furniture Fair Singapore/ASEAN Furniture Show (IFFS/AFS)**

The International Furniture Fair Singapore/ASEAN Furniture Show (IFFS/AFS) began in 1981 and has since

grown to be regarded by industry experts as Asia's most prestigious furniture trade show. Held in conjunction with the ASEAN Furniture Show (AFS), IFFS/AFS provides an effective marketing platform for regional companies to venture into global markets. As a testimony to the quality of the show, IFFS/AFS is the first Asian-based international furniture fair to be accepted as a member of the elite Union des Foires Internationales, a Paris-based international authority on trade fairs. In addition, it is the only furniture trade event in Singapore to be awarded the 'Approved International Fair' status by International Enterprise Singapore, in acknowledgement of its role in promoting international trade. The Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau also recognises the fair as a major exhibition event in Singapore's international exhibition calendar.