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IFFS/AFS 2010:

Fresh Impetus

Richard Koh, COO of International Furniture Fair Singapore (IFFS), sheds light on the trade show's forays into design. By Keith Boi

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Positioning itself as the premium furniture trade event in Asia, the International Furniture Fair Singapore 2010, held in conjunction with the 27th ASEAN Furniture Show (IFFS/AFS 2010) from March 9-12, 2010, will be a four-day event showcasing the latest design capabilities and product developments in the higher end spectrum of the industry.

Show organiser International Furniture Fair Singapore is mounting an aggressive campaign to market IFFS/AFS 2010 as a design-oriented furniture show.

Richard Koh, the newly appointed chief operating officer of IFFS, expects next year's exhibition to further expand the spotlight on various design-led initiatives.

"In terms of space for 2010, we would like to stay humble on the size of exhibition and work on 60,000 gross square metres with the current economic situation, but we're quietly confident that those spaces will be choc-a-block full and we will make room for expansion," Mr Koh said.

Breath Of Fresh Air

Mr Koh, 50, was formerly the COO of Buylateral Group and responsible for developing a range of international marketing and product design and development programmes.

Seen as a businessman who has been actively involved in the local furniture industry, Mr Koh hopes to bring some fresh perspectives on the running of the exhibition by leveraging on his 30 years of trade experience. He has also been associated with the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC) through the years, having served as an executive committee member in various capacities since its inception in 1981.

Mr Koh pointed to the success of the



Singapore Mozaic showcase in Milan this year as an example of how local furniture firms are starting to develop their market niches. Likewise, he believes IFFS/AFS should develop its own proposition by focusing on design.

"We are still trying to grow the IFFS/AFS as an Asian show, and we expect the exhibitors to come primarily from ASEAN and the Indochina regions," Mr Koh added.

Promotional Boost

To promote the event, IFFS has organised a slate of promotional road shows in China, Malaysia, India, Europe and the US to garner interest from both exhibitors and buyers. In its promotional push for next year's exhibition, the show organiser will be spending close to S\$2.5 million (US\$1.7 million) for marketing and publicity purposes, essentially on the various activities and trade show participation for IFFS/AFS 2010.

While acknowledging that this year's event has experienced a slight dip - as compared to 2008, the number of exhibiting companies fell from 517 to 471 while the number of trade visitors dropped from 18,361 to 15,606 - somewhat reflecting the market sentiments caused by the economic downturn, Mr Koh expresses his confidence in the strong credibility the IFFS/AFS has already established to pull in the right crowds next year.

"These are the buyers who are not bargain-hunters. They look out for quality and new design trends. The targeted buyers for next year's show will come mainly from Europe," he explained.



Besides honing in on design elements, IFFS/AFS aims to achieve approximately 10 percent growth in several areas of the furniture showcases next year, such as in the upholstery and outdoor furniture segments.

"We're leaving no stones unturned to boost the other segments of the show, as mentioned upholstery and outdoor/garden furniture, to give a more holistic presentation to the buyers and visitors," Mr Koh added.

IFFS/AFS is also exploring plans to further engage woodworking industry partners in the ASEAN region, with various long-term collaborations being discussed at the moment.

With the flurry of activities and promotional efforts,

expectations are raised for IFFS/AFS 2010 to live up to its billing as the region's top design-oriented furniture exhibition.

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Richard Koh, the newly appointed chief operating officer of IFFS