

Green River Panels is set to build Southeast Asia's biggest particleboard plant, boasting a 50.4-metre continuous press—the longest in the region. The new line, which is Green River's third, will see the company double annual production capacity to over one million cubic metres, making it one of the largest production powerhouses in Southeast Asia. It will be delivered by Siempelkamp.

"The negotiations took a long time but I believe that this agreement will provide a lot of value for us. We have known [Siempelkamp] for more than 10 years," said David Huang, chief executive officer of Green River, at the signing ceremony in Hatyai witnessed by representatives from both client and vendor.

"All eyes will be on Green River for this project," Mr Philipps said. Addressing the Green River team, he added, "Your project has our personal attention and like a marriage, we welcome open and frank communication between both parties."

Although Green River is no stranger to Siempelkamp's expertise, this is the first time it is working together with the Krefeld-based technology company on such a massive scale. (PB Line 1 runs on Buettner's energy plant while Line 2 uses size reduction technology from Pallmann.) Never before has the Taiwanese-owned company sealed such a historic contract, marking a significant milestone for itself and a benchmark for the panels industry in Southeast Asia.

team were single-minded about Green River's commitment to producing green products. (Green River is named for the company's environmental philosophy.)

Waste from rubber plantations and wood that is too poor for solid furniture often end up in the backyard of a particleboard line, which makes the panel product 'green,' and "I am sure there will be a demand for these panels in future. I believe Siempelkamp can support us in our vision for a green production line," Mr Huang says.

He looks fitter than when I last saw him three years ago, younger than all his 57 years. Yet, he is still the visionary businessman, steady and consistent, making calculated moves before planting resources in the right places.

Green River

to build third PB line,

The particleboard producer's latest decision banks on the belief that Asia is overflowing with opportunities, which makes now a great time to invest in a new line.

Jurgen Philipps, speaker of the Siempelkamp Management Board, added, "We are happy and honoured to be selected for this project. This is our second success in three months in Southeast Asia. It is a good sign as it shows we are considered a market leader in this area."

The new line also sees Siempelkamp delivering its first ContiRoll Generation 9 continuous press to Asia. It will also feature machinery by its subsidiaries: Buettner, CMC Texpan and Pallmann. Together the engineering team will build the biggest drum dryer and energy plant in Southeast Asia as well as the world's biggest knife ring flaker.

The first board is expected to birth in the last quarter of 2019.

BIG, BIGGER, BIGGEST

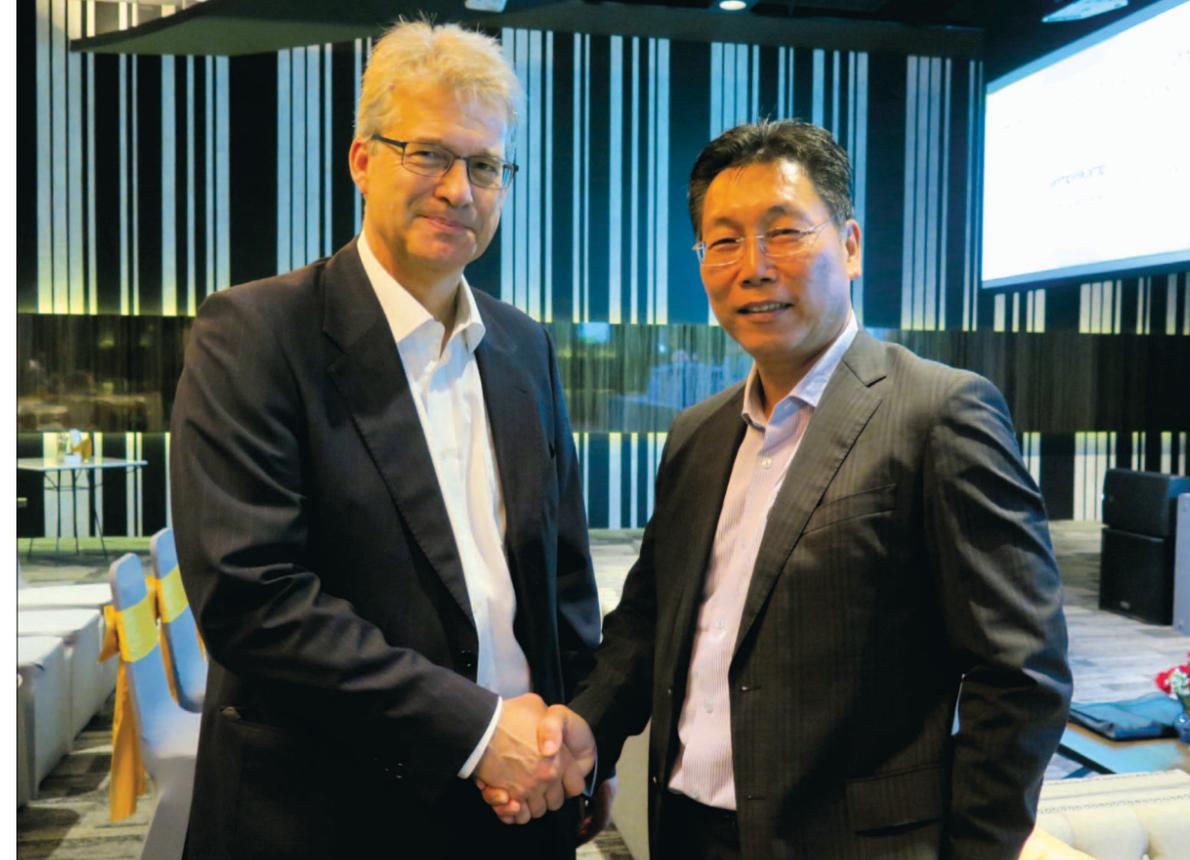
The upcoming line is based in Trang, Thailand, over 200km away from Green River's headquarters in Songkhla. It is one of the best fits for a particleboard line. Thailand's south is mostly agrarian, providing an ample supply of rubberwood to feed the factory. It is close to various ports of call where products can easily be shipped worldwide.

On the decision to seal the agreement with Siempelkamp, Mr Huang said he was pleased that the management and engineering

He doesn't stop, it appears. Decisions keep him busy and discussions with European suppliers often see him working late into the small hours. But being busy is a good thing, he jests, "otherwise the business is not moving."

The green field investment was conceived over two years ago, even before the second line was fully operational. Mr Huang says the planning phase involved a lot of research and consulting. It was a slow and long-drawn process, but necessary.

Green River's move to increase production capacity comes at a time where industry insiders observe a difficult future for panel plants—a



Jurgen Philipps, speaker of the Siempelkamp Management Board (left) and David Huang, CEO of Green River Panels.

featuring SE Asia's longest continuous press

By Lee Zhuomin

an oversupply situation, followed by a lack of raw materials. But this does not bother Mr Huang. After all, these trends are cyclical, almost normal.

Instead, he is looking forward to Asia's bullish furniture market buoyed by a slow but sure rising middle income class among the region's four billion people. As standards of living improve, so will robust buying, especially that of 'green' products—the very thing Green River offers. Rather than wait, he is keen to capture this potential before others do.

"When we examined the numbers, Asia's demand for boards per capita is still lower compared to Europe. However, this will change in the future. Demand will go up; the outlook in the long run is positive," Mr Huang says.



Mr Philipps presents a model of the ContiRoll to Mr Huang at the signing ceremony in Hatyai on Nov 28, 2017.

SUCCESS IN THE MAKING

Green River's ambitious plant will no doubt be another challenge for Siempelkamp, which unveiled its star engineering feat, the ContiRoll Generation 9, at LIGNA 2017. However, Mr Philipps is confident of delivering on his service promise:

"We are aware of potential problems, what can happen during installation and we have the right people to support the project," he says. "So we will put this puzzle together and deliver [results] for Green River."

Siempelkamp has supplied more than 350 continuous presses around the world since 1985. What is heartening for the company too, is that Green River has not only signed for the core equipment—that is, the pre- and continuous press, and finishing line—but the whole suite of innovations. Other machines for the new line also include the new EcoDrive, SPC and SicoScan measuring equipment—all launched at LIGNA last year.

As the furniture industry trends towards a preference for particleboard, both Mr Huang and Mr Philipps have high hopes for the market. And being on the same page marks the beginning of good things to come, as Mr Philipps concludes, "We are definitely very pleased to be part of Green River's success story.

"We started great and got along very well. We will continue to bring this spirit of cooperation into the engineering and installation phase." @

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**- David Huang,
CEO of Green River Panels**

