

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY MR ONG SOO CHUAN, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,  
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS), AT THE UPPER THOMSON SECONDARY  
SCHOOL'S 9TH ANNUAL SPEECH & PRIZE-GIVING DAY ON  
THURSDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 1975 AT 3.00 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to be invited to be with you this afternoon to celebrate the Annual Speech Day of your school. This is the 10th Anniversary since your school was founded. From the report by your Principal, Mr Goh, I am delighted to note that your school has produced remarkable results in both academic and extra-curricular activities, particularly your profound performance in organising the Ceramic Exhibition held at the National Library in September 1975 which is commendable and remarkable.

For the past 150 years, Singapore has thrived on her entrepot trade which made her the 4th largest port in the world. It was not until the 1960s that industrialisation became the priority of Singapore's economic policy. Singapore today is one of the major international communications and commercial centres, enjoying a per capita of GDP of about US\$2,000. Today the main contributors to Singapore's economic well-being are trade and manufacturing.

Manufacturing industries now account for 1/4 of the GDP compared to less than 1/10 in 1960. As the character of the Singapore economy changes, it imposes new demands on the type and quality of manpower. Hence, the educational system and other training institutions have been constantly altered and designed to meet the changing demands in Singapore. Technical education has been introduced in secondary schools to produce a pool of technically qualified manpower for the growing demands of manufacturing industries in Singapore. The Government continues to encourage and promote foreign investments and manufacturing industries in Singapore. Legislation are enacted to provide protection, incentives and other forms of encouragement to foreign investments. The Government also actively assists in industrial training programmes and sets up other institutions to upgrade the skill of the labour force and quality of the products produced by the manufacturing industries in Singapore.

To consolidate and expand her overseas markets, Singapore's manufacturing products must remain not only competitive in price but also in quality. We have always emphasized on quality and productivity in Singapore. It is gratifying to note that the drive for quality and productivity has been felt in the manufacturing industries. There is no doubt quality, productivity and price competitiveness remain important. However, the time has come for us to be more sophisticated in our approach to overseas markets.

In our drive for productivity, quality and price competitiveness for our products, we appear to neglect a very important aspect, that is, the presentation of our products. Presentation basically means the outward form and design of the product. One of the most effective and impressionable forms of presentation of a product is its packaging. The first contact a customer has with a product is its presentation design or packaging and not its internal contents. Therefore, the presentation of a product must first be attractive and able to instil confidence into a would-be buyer. Of course, to sustain the confidence of a customer, the contents of the product must also be of the required quality.

Let me cite a few examples on the relevance and effectiveness of presentation in our drive to promote our exports:

- i An effective and quality ointment produced in a Singapore factory will not be able to find access into overseas markets if the ointment were to be packed in a queer shaped bottle with a clumsy metallic lid. It is obvious that such an ointment would be more attractive if it were to be packed in a collapsible tube with suitable labelling and design.
- ii Coconut jam could perhaps be made more attractive if it were to be packed in a bottle with an appropriately designed label.

iii Crockery and ceramics produced in local factory may promote better sales in overseas markets with beautifully designed local attractions such as orchids, etc instead of imitating design of flowers commonly grown in other countries and not in our soil.

iv The Japanese are one of the foremost experts in packaging, industrial design and presentation of their products. The success of the Japanese cars is not only due to the quality of the engine but also because of the presentation of the ultimate product, that is, the car/itself. Every Japanese Car is elegantly shaped and internally decorated. Japanese perfumes and other cosmetics are packed in very attractive and appealing containers.

I have only cited a few examples and the list is no end. In essence then, the presentation of a product should be:

- i attractive and appealing
- ii able to instil confidence
- iii convenient to the user
- iv indicative of the quality of its contents.

The presentation, industrial design and packaging of a product is a complex and specialised field. It is important that for Singapore to succeed in its industrialisation programme, its products must be able to find its way to overseas markets. Singapore has to develop the field of presentation, industrial design and packaging apart from continuing to upgrade the quality, productivity and price of competitiveness in the manufacturing industries. And for Singapore to have a strong foundation in this field, it must begin early. Technical education in secondary schools, institutions of higher learning and other industrial training institutions in Singapore should encourage the development of such an expertise. Trainees could be sent overseas to specialised institutions and a body should be

set up to encourage and provide the necessary training in the field of presentation, industrial design and packaging.

As an educational institution in the rural area, Upper Thomson Secondary School, besides producing skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar workers, with the teaching aids and equipments donated by the School Advisory Committee has the potentiality to develop into the technical field of presentation and packaging of a product besides the art of ceramic.

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