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OPENING ADDRESS BY BRIG GEN (RES) LEE HSIEN LOONG,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE & INDUSTRY
AT THE OPENING OF DESIGN CENTRE SINGAPORE
ON APR 11, AT 11.30 AM

Dr Tay Eng Soon, Chairman of Design Council
Mr Alan Yeo, Chairman of Trade Development Board
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and gentlemen

I am happy to be here today at the opening of the
Design Centre Singapore.

2. More countries are recognising the importance of
design in their export promotion, and have embarked on this
route to make their products more competitive in
international markets. Some of the best designed products
are from Europe. The Italians, Germans and many European
manufacturers have made a name for themselves through
design.

3. In Asia, the Japanese have also incorporated good
design into their socio-economic fabric. Today, Japan is a
world leader in many products such as cars, electronics and
household appliances. This economic miracle did not happen
overnight. It was the result of a conscious effort by both
the government and the private sector to use modern
technology with industrial design in the country's economic
development.

4. At one time, goods made in Japan were snubbed, and
dismissed as being shoddily designed and poorly

manufactured. Today Japanese cars, consumer electronics, and high technology products dominate world markets. Japan took more than 30 years to become a country of excellence in design. It now sets aside a week a year to be "Design Week". This reflects how intimately design, an abstract and intangible subject, has been woven into the lives of the Japanese consumers and corporations.

5. Design is a key reason for the competitiveness of Japanese products. The philosophy of the design movement itself contributes to Japan's economic success. Design is used as a tool to improve the standard of living and quality of daily life. The combination of new technology and industrial design yields direct benefits to consumers.

6. Design is integral to the whole planning and decision-making process of the enterprise. A well-designed product should not be just pleasing to the eye. It should also be reliable, easy and economical to manufacture, use and service. Companies often treat design as just good looks - the aesthetics and the cosmetics, and pay insufficient attention to design during the manufacturing and marketing stages. As design determines how a product is to be manufactured, the cost of making and maintaining it as well as the response of consumers, good design should be factored in right from the start of a product cycle.

7. Over the years, Singapore manufacturers have built up a good name internationally as suppliers of reliable

products. The challenge is to build on this foundation and make the label "Made in Singapore" synonymous with "good design and good value for money". As our firms venture and expand into overseas markets, we will find that they cannot compete on price alone. Someone will always come up with a similar product more cheaply. Our products must withstand critical scrutiny in terms of quality and value for money. Singapore manufacturers need to use design to add value to their products, and to differentiate them from others. This requires commitment, and willingness to acquire expertise and invest time and effort in creating a good design.

8. The setting up of the Design Council and the opening of the Design Centre by the Trade Development Board reflect the Government's emphasis on promoting good design in Singapore's next phase of development. The Design Centre is targeting its promotion not just at manufacturers, but also students. It will hold regular design workshops and clinics for manufacturers to keep in step with the latest market trends, consumers' tastes and preferences. It will organise a design programme over the next two years to help furniture companies apply design in upgrading their products. This programme will bring in top international designers from Europe and Japan, amongst others.

9. The Design Centre will also work closely with the Ministry of Education to increase design awareness among our students. The annual Young Designers Award, held since

1988, has established itself as an opportunity for students and young aspiring talents to present their creative ideas. The Centre will offer scholarships jointly with Singapore companies to students to pursue their interests in the field of design, either locally or overseas. These activities should make a contribution to raising the standard of design in Singapore.

10. I am happy to declare the Design Centre open.

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