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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT WEE KIM WEE
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL DESIGN FORUM, SINGAPORE
AT RAFFLES CITY CONVENTION CENTRE
ON WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1988 AT 10.00 AM

I am happy to be here this morning at the inauguration of the First Singapore International Design Forum.

This Forum is a major event for Singapore. It would certainly deepen our appreciation of design and the important role it plays in the industrial success of a nation. For Singapore, it underlines the commitment the Singapore Government places in promoting good design. The Forum also marks the official launching of our design promotion programme as a national endeavour.

Design is all around us. Many of us may not be conscious of it. The house we live in, the place we work, the clothes we wear and the things we use - what is at the heart of all these is the influence of design. Design is that crucial element that makes the difference between a useful and appealing product against one which is common and mediocre. The impact of design is all embracing in our pursuit of physical well-being.

As we modernise and improve in our living standards, we become more discerning and particular about our living environment, both at home and at the work place.

Consumers are no longer contented with fulfilling their basic needs as they become more affluent. They prefer things that are unique, visually appealing and of a high quality to suit their individual lifestyle and values. This pattern will become more prominent as the marketplace becomes increasingly filled with all kinds of goods competing for attention.

Manufacturers will have to bring out new products to meet these ever-changing needs and, indeed, to create a demand for their products. Unless the design is good, the product will not sell successfully. Our manufacturers, therefore, must be conscious of the need for good design right from the start of a product's life-cycle.

Design is that something extra that provides satisfaction over and above what a product is made to solve. That added value is design and it is that which facilitates and improves our daily lives and working environment.

Manufacturers and designers, therefore, need to work hand-in-hand to harness their resources in order to bring out the right products that will satisfy the diversified needs of society. They have to achieve a harmonious combination of function, engineering effectiveness and aesthetic appeal of the product at the right price.

Singapore is known for its excellent town-planning and the use of limited land to full advantage as an industrial yet clean and green city.

This consciousness of good design must be encouraged so that it permeates to all levels of our community. This is critical for Singapore because of our limited physical resources and our exposure to international competition.

The Government of Singapore, therefore, is determined to create a climate in which we learn to value design and give it proper recognition. Indeed, it should all begin in school.

Design consciousness really comes from a society's own culture. And the capacity for creativity is rooted in one's own art and art forms.

I am delighted that our Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, which was set up earlier this year, is now drawing up a detailed plan on how to consolidate our cultural heritage and develop the arts in Singapore. We must build on past achievements if we are to blossom in the future.

This design forum is part of a long-term commitment of Singapore towards the goal of making Singapore a culturally vibrant society. It is much more than a display of attractively-designed products and packaging. It will generate greater awareness and appreciation of good design among producers, designers and consumers, the Three Wise Men of the Design Forum logo.

In particular, I am glad that the forum has included a display of award-winning products of our first Singapore Design Award as well as a selection of well-designed Singapore products. Together, these represent Singapore's potential in achieving design excellence of an international standard.

I am also glad to see that there is an abundance of our young talents, judging from the very enthusiastic response to the Young Designers Award competition. Their talents must be nurtured and professionally trained so that in time they will form our pool of qualified designers to meet the ever-increasing demand from the industry.

Finally, Singapore is most appreciative of the strong support from Japan, Italy, Federal Republic of Germany, Taiwan, United Kingdom and the United States. Their display of outstanding works will definitely not be missed by our own design industry and the public in general. I am sure our overseas visitors will benefit as much from the excellent display. Furthermore, the contribution of our eminent speakers, in view of their wealth of experience and achievements, will be of tremendous value to the promotion of design activities in Singapore and the region as a whole.

I have great pleasure in declaring open the First International Design Forum.

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