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SME SPOTLIGHT

Scheme has designs on product excellence

Published on Dec 25, 2013

(http://www.straitsimes.com/2013/12/25/sme-spotlight-scheme-has-designs-on-product-excellence-20131225)

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Design Business Chamber Singapore president Tai Lee Siang (left) shaking hands with Japan Institute of Design Promotion president Kazunori Iizuka. -- PHOTO: JAPAN INSTITUTE OF DESIGN PROMOTION

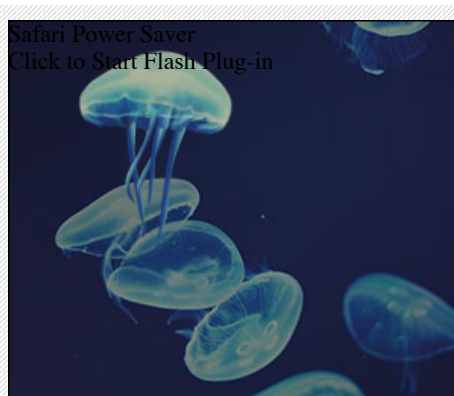
By Yasmine Yahya

A NEW initiative is underway to prompt companies and consumers to change the way they think about good design.

Design Business Chamber Singapore is driving the move by launching the country's first Good Design Mark, which will be awarded to companies deemed to have incorporated excellent design standards into their products.

The chamber's president, Mr Tai Lee Siang, said: "There are symbols and marks on products that tell people whether they are healthy, of good quality, or made with high sustainability standards but there are few marks in the world that will tell you whether something is well-designed, and we believe this will be Singapore's first."

It might seem counter-intuitive at first that consumers would need a symbol to determine whether a product has been well-designed or not but Mr Tai, who is also the managing director of design consultancy Ong & Ong, said he believes good



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design goes beyond aesthetics.

He said: "Commonly, people would think that good design means we're talking about something beautiful but it goes beyond that. It's about innovation, invention, benefiting mankind."

Companies that submit their products for the Good Design Mark will be judged on six criteria, including whether the product would improve the users' lives, is aspirational, has a social value and if it could transform society.

Design Business Chamber Singapore has signed a deal with the Japan Institute of Design Promotion (JDP) to benefit companies that receive the Good Design Mark. JDP is the organiser of the Good Design Award (G Mark), one of the most prestigious design awards in the world.

Singapore firms that obtain the local Good Design Mark will be eligible to apply for the second screening of the G Mark without going through the first screening.

G Mark recipients will also be able to do the same if they wish to apply for the SG Mark award.

Said Mr Tai: "The G Mark award usually receives about 3,000 entries each year so Singapore companies which have the local mark can bypass that first stage and immediately make it to the shortlist.

"Obtaining the G Mark would help Singapore companies gain entry into the Japanese market. Meanwhile, the Japanese also want to encourage more of their companies to come to South-east Asia, and Singapore is a natural gateway," he added.


A few Singapore firms have already obtained the G Mark, including Osim, for its massage chairs, and Lam Soon Group, for its Bio-home brand of kitchen cleaning liquid.

The first Singapore Good Design Mark awards will be given out in March next year.

There is no cap on the number of companies that could be awarded the mark but Mr Tai said the chamber hopes to have at least one top winner and between 15 and 20 others.

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