

# Empowering design and creativity

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Collaborations and exchanges between member countries top the agenda of the Asia Design Sharing Council meeting on Monday.

The aim of the cooperation is towards creating a better world through design.

The council, which is a small group of like-minded organisations geared towards promoting better awareness of design and its functions in their respective countries, comprises members from Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia.

The members are the Centres for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) and the Design Center of the Philippines (DCP), the Thailand Institute of Design and Innovation Promotion (DITP) and Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC), Korea Institute of Design Promotion (KIDP), Malaysia Design Council (MRM) and the Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency (VIETRADE).

The meeting, the first to be held outside Korea, was co-chaired by KIDP president Dr Lee Taeyong and MRM chairman Professor Datuk Dr Ahmad Zahradudin.

Collaboration between member countries was previously limited to one-to-one interactions between Korea and the individual Asian countries.

KIDP mooted the idea to form the

council three years ago. It meets annually to review the activities organised over the year as well as discuss future collaborations and projects.

In his speech, Lee reminded members that design had the power to change the world by touching people's hearts. Hence, he called for more collaborations between member countries towards creating greater awareness.

Ahmad called for the council to expand its cooperation with countries beyond Asia such as Germany which would allow member countries to tap into the established European design knowledge and industry.

CITEM, the export marketing arm of the Philippines Department of Trade and Industry, was represented by its executive director Rosario Virginia Gertes and Special Projects Division chief Rowena Mendosa.

They spoke on the upcoming DeRign Global, an expo highlighting global design and craftsmanship among Asian countries, and their individual brand of design and craftsmanship.

The DCP, represented by executive director Myrna Sumbao and senior trade-industry development specialist Margaret Pastura, explained that the main activities of the centre was to promote design as a tool for improving the quality and competitiveness of Philippine



The 3rd Asia Design Sharing Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur explores the idea of having more collaborations and exchanges among member countries.

products.

The centre brings together young upcoming designers who help small and medium enterprises in the areas of design.

The DITP, represented by director Kathathong Theongyal, spoke on the focus on national identity in the areas of design in Thailand. He briefed members on the Design Excellence Award or DEMark which is an award and symbol for good designed Thai products.

He also highlighted the 'Slow Hand Design' which aims to develop local crafts which reflect and retain their Thai origins to meet global

market opportunities.

TCDC senior director Noppadol Weerakitki touched on the centre's aim to facilitate knowledge of design and make it more accessible to the public. This was done via design for the community, an initiative which came about after the big floods which hit Thailand in 2011.

The centre has invited designers to design products which they feel can assist people during times of disaster and entrepreneurs to commercialise viable products.

Besides designing for the community, he said the centre was also looking into designing for the aged as the

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numbers of the elderly were increasing all over the world.

KIDP, besides actively engaging member countries on design sharing activities, is looking into the service design area, especially in the area of tourism. Its director and head of global cooperation division Maing Eunsoo said the institute was working on a programme between Korea and Asian countries which would help policy makers draw up suitable guidelines.

MRM senior general manager Faton Shihf Jaafar said serious efforts were being made to promote greater public awareness on quality design. These were done via several initiatives, namely the Malaysian Good Design Mark which is the highest design recognition from the government which endorses products with quality design manufacturing.

VIETRADE, represented by its deputy director general To Hoang Linh and deputy director of market research and development Nguyen Thi Huyen, alluded to the emerging area of design in Vietnam and activities geared towards creating a design network in the country.

Besides raising awareness, it helps match designers with companies and businesses. The aim is to help improve design and quality of products for export.

The 4th council meeting is expected to be held in Thailand next year.