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Enhance product quality, Law urges

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LOCAL manufacturers should focus on enhancing their products' quality to increase confidence in Malaysian products and boost product competitiveness.

Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment Datuk Law Hieng Ding in making this call at the Malaysia Good Design Mark '97 award presentation ceremony in Shah Alam yesterday, said the ringgit's depreciation should be viewed positively.

"The depreciation of the local currency will make Malaysian-made products more competitive in the international market.

"This is the best opportunity for Malaysian manufacturers to increase public confidence in Malaysian-made products and also to venture into the international market," he said.

The Good Design Mark is one way to increase attractiveness of Malaysian-made products, both locally and internationally, he said. These efforts will be futile without the support of Malaysians.

The minister also said the response to the award from manufacturers has not been encouraging as many local firms are adopting a "wait and see" approach. Of the seven recipients, only two were local companies.

"The most effective way to tell the world that our products are of no less quality is for us to use them ourselves. We will not gain the confidence of outsiders in our products if we ourselves have no confidence in them.

He said, that just as in other areas, "we have to first set a good example for others to emulate".

A total of seven products were identified as good design products meeting standard requirements needed for the Good Design Mark.

The Malaysia Design Council conducted two judging sessions in September last year and the products were selected based on criteria such as aesthetics and popular appeal, practicality and functionality, ergonomics and safety.

Chairman of the Malaysia Design Council Datuk Dr Ahmad Tajuddin Ali, said the role of design in a product and its packaging is undoubtable and a design which has "quality will not only increase demand" but also attract consumers.

Through the award, manufacturers, he added, will be able to promote their products through the media and exhibitions.

He added that depending on the number of entries received this year, awards may be given twice a year.

The Malaysia Good Design Mark was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Malaysia Design Conference and Exhibition in 1996.

The programme, organised by the Malaysia Design Council, is aimed at encouraging and recognising innovative, creative and well-designed Malaysian products and packaging.

To increase awareness of the award, Law said, information will be disseminated through chambers of commerce and industry and manufacturers' associations.

Meanwhile, Law told Bernama that the oil waste collected along the Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam coast after an oil slick occurrence last month will be disposed of either by burning or burying.

He said suitable sites to carry out the work has yet to be decided by

the committee set up to clean up the oil slick washed ashore on December 24.

Law gave an assurance that whatever method used to dispose of the waste will not bring any adverse effect to the environment and the wellbeing of the people.

Authorities have yet to determine the origin of the slick.

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