

**T**he private sector is set to take the driver seat in steering industries and enterprises on the growth path, with the launch of the Local Enterprise and Association Development (LEAD) programme.

The LEAD programme is a multi-agency effort – between SPRING and IE Singapore supported by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It aims to develop industry associations which are willing and able, to initiate and drive projects to improve the overall competence and competitiveness of the local enterprises within the industry sectors.

Some \$50 million has been set aside to kick-start and accelerate the process of building up the capabilities of associations to lead in the industry development efforts over the next three years.

Mr Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry, launched the new programme on 4 May 2005. Addressing some 150 industry association representatives, Mr Lim said, “The LEAD programme signals the government’s strong commitment to work with our industry associations to nurture our local industrial landscape.” He believes that by adopting an “industry-led and government-backed” approach, industry associations can play an instrumental role in the improvement and upgrading of industries.

Mr Lim cited examples of successful economies such as Europe, Japan, Korea and Taiwan where the presence of a strong base of industry associations was built to serve the enterprises leveraging on their knowledge and experience. Mr Lim hopes that industry associations in Singapore would develop winning strategies to further sharpen the competitiveness of local enterprises. The local enterprises will stand to benefit by participating in the associations’ industry-wide programmes.

Industry representatives present at the event welcomed this “industry-led and government-backed” initiative. Mr Wong Mong Hong, Deputy President of the



Singapore Food Manufacturers’ Association (SFMA), responded positively to the government’s call for associations to assume the industry leadership role. He said, “For the food manufacturing industry, we have our unique problems and challenges. At the association level, we understand our industries’ needs and our own business. We are definitely keen in continuing to play a lead role in developing and moving our industry forward.”

Mr Sim Kah Choon, Vice President of the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), which has set a vision to put Singapore on the world furniture design map by increasing the number of design-led companies in Singapore to 100 by 2014, felt that the programme would “accelerate their reach to achieve this goal and the



The panel (from left) comprising Mr Loh Khum Yean, Chief Executive, SPRING (Chairman), Mr Sim Kah Choon, Vice President, SFIC; Mr Wong Mong Hong, Deputy President, SFMA; Ms Linda Sein, Director, Precision Engineering & Light Industries, EDB; Mr Ted Tan, Deputy Chief Executive, IE Singapore; and Mr Edward Ang, President TaFf responding to questions from the associations.

entire furniture industry will stand to gain from it”.

Mr Edward Ang, President of the Textile & Fashion Federation (TaFf) added that the LEAD programme was launched at the right time for the association to roll out their industry programme, based on the industry blueprint that was conceived with “activities in industry capability development and business collaboration among enterprises within the textile and fashion industry”.

The SFMA, SFIC and TaFf shared with the other participants their ideas and experiences on working with and helping their members. They also spoke about how the associations could help in building networks, competencies and collaborations.

LEAD is open to all industry associations, in particular those in key sectors which contribute significantly to the economy and have a good representation of industry members as well as a good track record of assisting local enterprises. Interested associations can submit their industry development proposals, for assistance of up to 70% of the qualifying cost of the projects under the LEAD

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*~ Mr Wong Mong Hong, Deputy President of the Singapore Food Manufacturers’ Association (SFMA)*

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programme. The areas cover, but are not limited to, technology and infrastructure, expertise and managerial competence, business collaboration, intelligence, and advisory and consultancy on industry best practices and competence. **Pd**

For more information on LEAD, please visit: [www.spring.gov.sg](http://www.spring.gov.sg) or call the SME First Stop at Tel : 6898 1800.

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