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SPEECH BY INCHE SHA'ARI TADIN, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
TO THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, AT THE CULTURAL CENTRE,  
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Role of cultural bodies in changing  
the way of thinking of the Malays

There are about a hundred Malay organisations, engaged in various kinds of activities, registered in Singapore today. Some of them are active, some semi-active (they are active only when there is a function or celebration) and the rest exist in name only.

Duplication of Activities

But the most significant thing is that more than half of these organisations are engaged in similar activities; in other words there is duplication of activities amongst them. This is not only a waste of effort but also a waste of time and energy.

Associations or organisations amongst which there is duplication of activities should amalgamate, or at least their activities should be co-ordinated. For example, Sriwana is an organisation that is well-known for its activities in the field of culture; and those organisations that have similar inclinations should amalgamate with it and co-operate with it. Similarly, Darul Afiah is well-known for its skill and ability in the field of sports, particularly in football; and other organisations that have similar interest should join it in its activities. And even in games, the activities of organisations which are interested in a particular type of game, such as hockey, badminton, etc., should be co-ordinated, so as to pool their resources in their efforts to achieve the same objective in this multi-racial society of ours.

Singaporean

It is the policy of the Government to provide opportunities for all cultures - Malay, Chinese, Tamil and others - to develop, on lines that are typically Singaporean - vigorous, rugged, disciplined and dynamic.

These Singapore characteristics can and should be reflected in the dances, songs, plays, etc. And these characteristics could also be incorporated in the dramas so as to show the industry, the competitive spirit and the high aspirations of the people of Singapore, so that the Malays may be made aware of the achievement and progress that have been going on around them in Singapore. Fictitious stories that tend to weaken the spirit should be reduced. And it is in this sphere that the local Malay cultural organisations can play their appropriate role.

### Demand for Talents

Singapore needs talents in all forms of culture, like singers, dancers, writers, actors and actresses, and artists, who can not only enhance Singapore's reputation but can be "exported" to other countries, just like pop and classical singers and dancers from India, Hongkong, Taipeh, the Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, etc., are "exported" to show their artistic talents. When we have such talents we too can send troupes to other countries. It is for this reason that the Art Gallery, the Academy of Art, the National Theatre Company and the Art Council are established in Singapore, to seek out the talents from our society.

Singapore is not only situated in a strategic position in Southeast Asia but it has a population of high quality - it has housing, economic, trade and technological experts who are well-known for their expertise, and it can produce artistes of international calibre, and in this respect the Malays in Singapore should pool their resources in order to give their contribution in these fields.

### Two-pronged solutions:

On the question of changing the way of thinking of the Malays in Singapore, they should adapt themselves to the changes and the new situation and accept new ideas. Malay cultural organisations can help in bringing awareness to the Malays. This can be done in two ways:-

- (1) through mass media like the Radio/TV;
- (2) through personal reinforcement.

### Mass Media

In view of the influence of the Radio and TV, ideas can be incorporated into plays, speeches, forums, interviews, etc. There should not be meaningless and aimless dialogue. We must realise the fact that every second of Radio/TV time requires money, and if the time allocated is used for a programme that is senseless and of no benefit, then it is a waste of public funds. Thus we need writers who really understand the problems faced by the nation, who follow the developments around our country, and who do not just write about things that happen in the home or in the kitchen. They should understand problems relating to education and employment, and know about scientific achievements, and so on. I am confident that writers who wish to play their role in the achievement of progress and prosperity for the people will be able to make use of all the opportunities that are available if they really observe all that happens around them with a critical eye.

We do not want the Malays to be engrossed in fictitious films because this will poison their minds, particularly the youths, who have a craze only for pop songs, a-go-go and long hair. If this state of affairs is allowed to continue, what will the Malay community be like ten or twenty years from now? Is it enough for us to just play around and enjoy ourselves? Will we let ourselves be left behind and then sigh: "it's just our fate!"

Although the Malays are small in number, it does not follow that we are helpless and have no capacity for endeavour equal to that of other people in Singapore. We must build up our capacity for endeavour if we want to achieve equality with the other people in Singapore.

#### Personal Reinforcement

As regards personal reinforcement, this can be done through lectures, talks, forums, etc. This method, I believe, would be more effective if every organisation plans its activities well. You must plan your activities in accordance with the provisions of your organisation's constitution. Do not go for too many activities. Let them be just a few, but well organised. For instance, you may launch "operation change attitude", "operation spirit to learn", "operation spirit of self-help", etc.

By having well-planned programmes, Malay organisations can record their failures and their successes. If they meet with failure, they should find the causes for such failure and regard it as a challenge. If they meet with success, they should not rest on their laurels but instead exchange views with other organisations that are interested in similar activities.

If our present generation is undermined by destructive habits and forms of amusement that are opposed to the teachings of our religion, the future will be very bleak for us. On the other hand, if there is supervision and control over the activities of our youths and if there is a sense of responsibility and a desire to change their attitude and

their way of thinking so as to adapt themselves to the needs of the times and the nation, then our hope to see a society that is progressive, dynamic and disciplined in all spheres of activities, including dancing, singing, etc., will be very bright. With all the facilities and assistance provided by the Government - Cultural Centre, Library, Art Council, Art Gallery, National Theatre, Adult Education Board, etc. - which provide opportunities for the development of talents and the production of cultural-minded people, there is no reason why we cannot progress together with the rest of the people, if we make full use of our resources. But, it is a pity to see, for instance, such a few Malays making use of the facilities provided by the National Library and the Adult Education Board, when so many of them are prepared to expend their energy, money and time on art. This is an unhealthy state of affairs and detrimental to the progress of the Malays. If we concentrate too much on one type of activity then we shall be lacking in other types of activities.

From now on, before it is too late, Malay cultural bodies in this country must re-organise their activities and place the emphasis on activities that may bring benefit to the community, such as the running of tuition classes, the organisation of discussion groups and so on. They must not waste their time on such things as poetry contest which is time-consuming but of little practical value. We must be realistic in outlook and must have definite objects and principles. The local Malay cultural organisations are engaged only in providing entertainment and whiling away their leisure time. Times have changed. We must no longer waste time on entertainment, empty talk and slogan shouting.

We must have a definite object in what we do. For example, if we are staging or writing a drama we must have the object of inculcating awareness amongst the Malays. And if we want to see the realisation of the Government's aspiration to build a democratic and modern multi-racial society, we must do something about it in a practical manner. It will not do to show to the public the quarrels that are supposed to take place in a Malay family, because this gives a wrong picture of a Malay Family life

I hope that you will do all you can to help change the way of thinking of the Malays.

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