

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY THE SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION,  
MR CHAI CHONG YII, AT THE OPENING OF THE CHARITY  
ART EXHIBITION AT THE NANYANG SIANG PAU EXHIBITION  
HALL ON SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1979, AT 4.30 P.M.

When Mr Tan Chor-Yong wrote to me about this charity art exhibition which is held in conjunction with the International Year of the Child in aid of the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore, he said: "In my own little and humble way, I am doing my bit as a repayment to society for what we are lucky to have for ourselves". This short statement conveys a sincere feeling of indebtedness to society. It also shows us how the indebtedness can be repaid graciously. Holding an art exhibition with such a motive surely deserves all our support.

Though I am not an artist, I feel that a piece of art is more than what is visible to our eyes. Its beauty is what we perceive in our mind. As our perception varies with emotional changes, our depth of appreciation is therefore not constant. We may like it more at one moment but dislike it later. The reverse may happen. This, I think, is also the very nature of an artistic creation. Without a beautiful thought in one's mind, one cannot project an image of beauty. Similarly when an artist thinks more of others than himself, such a selfless thought is likely to permeate through the colours and the strokes of his painting. Revelation of a person's thinking through his work is not unique to artists. It applies to almost every field of human activities.

Singapore is a modern society with a sophisticated social structure sustained by a big population on a small island. Competition for success is very intense. We all know how to take good care of our self-interests. None of us need to be reminded but what we sometimes forget is that we tend to over-value

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our self-interests above everything. We forget the very fact that we cannot sustain our individual self-interests without first contributing our efforts to maintain an efficient and harmonious society. It is therefore necessary to constantly remind ourselves of this social obligation.

Mr Tan has set a very good example in discharging his social obligation in an admirable way. Not too many people can match his. I wish him every success in his exhibition.

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