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SPEECH BY MR. WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(HEALTH AND CULTURE) AT THE EXHIBITION ON "CREATIVITY AND  
THE DISABLED" AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM YOUNG PEOPLE'S GALLERY  
ON 4 DECEMBER 1981 AT 5.30 PM

I count it my privilege to be given this opportunity to declare open this exhibition on Creativity And The Disabled. The term "creativity" is normally associated with the works of art of different forms and genre. These can either be paintings, sculptures, songs, dances, drama, poetry or novels. Names of distinguished authors, dramatists, playwrights, composers and painters will invariably be associated with these creative works of art. However, the term "disabled" brings from different connotation to many people.

Generally, the term evokes a multitude of feelings. These could range from a sense of pity or sympathy, thought of helplessness or hopelessness, the feeling of compassion or convulsion, the desire to render support or assistance to the disabled and the hope that the disabled could be self-supporting and self-reliant.

Putting the two terms together, it may, at a glance, appear incompatible. How could the disabled, with all their attendant handicaps be expected to produce something creative? Are we not asking too much of the disabled?

I am fully aware, as all who are assembled here today are, that we are here not as art connoisseurs viewing creative works of high standard; we are here with a different but special purpose. We wish to honour and register our sincere appreciation to our disabled brothers and sisters for their own creative works which they have produced. We are here to share their hopes and joy, their ideas and emotions as depicted in their drawings. We would like them to know that they are not alone in their world of creativity.

In this connection, I am happy to note that from the 48 pieces on display, six have been awarded prizes and three, whose painters are severely handicapped, have been given special recognition. One of these three did his drawings with the pencil in his mouth. I congratulate both the winners and all the participants on their remarkable efforts.

The theme adopted by the Singapore's National Co-ordinating Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons is "Full Participation and Integration of Disabled Persons". It is often heard from certain quarters that there exist some social barriers and prejudices in trying to integrate the disabled into the normal stream of our social life. Whatever the social barriers and prejudices are, both the society and the disabled community themselves must work towards eradicating them. It is understandable for the disabled to feel, at least initially, a sense of insecurity in the new job given to him. But with understanding and patience on the part of the employers matched with the courage and determination of the disabled themselves, this process of integration can be mutually rewarding. In this connection the parents and the relatives of the disabled could play a strong supportive role. They should not manifest an attitude of over-protectiveness towards the disabled. Whenever the situation permits and opportunities are available for the disabled to be suitably employed, the disabled should be given all the encouragement to venture into the frontiers of the real world of work. After all, for full integration and participation to be successful, the disabled cannot be expected to remain in their own protective environment indefinitely.

I am convinced that with the tight labour market today, employers in the public and private sectors are magnanimous enough in wanting to employ certain categories of disabled persons in certain specified area of work. Statistics show that the disabled have been employed as factory workers, lift attendants, caretakers, shoemakers, telephone operators and some even as clerks. It is my sincere hope that the number of the disabled persons successfully gaining employment will steadily increase year by year.

With that hope, I now have the pleasure to declare open this exhibition.

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