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**SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(HEALTH AND CULTURE), AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERACTION
IN CERAMICS EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ART GALLERY
ON FRIDAY 2 MARCH 1984 AT 5.30 PM**

I am pleased to officiate at the opening of this Exhibition on the Interaction of Oriental and European Ceramics today.

In its effort to promote an appreciation of art and culture, the national Museum has adopted an increasingly international outlook. While focusing on local and Southeast Asian art and history, it also endeavours to promote interest in world cultures, Asian and Occidental. This cosmopolitan approach is both inevitable and desirable as, with few exceptions, the culture of any region is the result of cross-cultural influences and it is impossible to regard it in isolation. Hence, the National Museum has regularly co-operated with foreign missions in staging presentations from their respective countries.

The exhibition on the interaction of oriental and European Ceramics represents the National Museum's first venture with a foreign mission in the promotion of ceramics. I understand that previous shows staged by the Museum have featured only works from the collection of local connoisseurs and institutions.

The Exhibition on Interaction of Oriental and European Ceramics is making a tour of the Far East including major cities in Japan, Hongkong and Jakarta. Comprising 162 exhibits on loan from major Dutch museums and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Exhibition provides insights into the pattern of porcelain trading activities among China, Japan and the Netherlands during the 17th and 18th centuries. It reveals the extent of influence ceramicists of the three countries had on each other. Hence, you shall see in this collection, distinctly Chinese designs on Dutch pieces, Dutch designs on Japanese pieces and Japanese designs on Chinese pieces. Needless to say, the Exhibition also illustrates the remarkable skill and flexibility of the artisans of that era.

Today, we are apt to take for granted the things that were once luxuries reserved for the use of the nobility. Glazed and decorated porcelain is now common household ware. There is, however, a growing awareness of antique porcelain as valuable investment and decorative items. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily matched by a corresponding interest in their origins and civilisations. Therein lies the challenge for the National Museum and ceramics interest groups to promote a more serious interest in the history and culture of ceramics.

The staging of ceramics exhibitions also provides an impetus to the promotion of ceramics and pottery as a fine art. In comparison with painting, the development of ceramics and pottery is in a fledgling state, hindered by a lack of equipment and workshop space.

I commend the Royal Netherlands Embassy for making possible this feast of ceramics which should be a source of great delight to connoisseurs and laymen alike. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Dutch companies for their valuable financial support towards the project. Credits are also due to the Singapore Cultural Foundation for sponsoring both the exhibition and the catalogue for the occasion.

I now have the pleasure to declare the Exhibition open .
