

The Sunday Times says

Valuing those who are differently abled

Paralympian Yip Pin Xiu has accomplished many feats in her 29 years, including five Paralympian gold medals and a stint as Nominated Member of Parliament. One of her most recent achievements was in sparking the lively discussion about the value of the Paralympic versus Olympic medals. The cash payout for a Paralympic gold medal is \$200,000, a mere fifth of the \$1 million for an athlete who wins Olympic gold. It is heartening that many Singaporeans have voiced support for mov-

ing towards some parity in that regard. As many have pointed out, Paralympians deserve and need the financial support. But this discussion extends beyond mere pecuniary considerations. Yip herself said she is not so much concerned with the dollar amount as with the issue of parity.

The disparity in the reward amount indicates a mindset that Singaporeans need to address, and redress, in the wider context of society here. It is only in recent years that people have become

more aware of issues of accessibility and parity. The Government earlier this year announced its acceptance of 21 recommendations by two work groups formed under the Third Enabling Masterplan. The recommendations included suggestions on improving accessibility and livability for the differently abled as well as preparing them for the future economy. Improvements to infrastructure are necessary and welcome. This must be matched by "heartware" development in the

rest of society. Bosses must be open to hiring differently abled people, for example. People must also exercise more tolerance and care in their interactions with those who need more time and space to accomplish what comes easily to many. It has often been said that the measure of a society lies in how it treats those who are perceived as being its weakest members. Yet it is these very individuals who often contribute most strongly to society's achievements and discourse.

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