

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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## Be inclusive in how we celebrate Paralympians



National para-swimmers Theresa Goh (left) and Yip Pin Xiu, with their medals won at the International Paralympics Committee Swimming European Open Championships 2016, at Changi Airport Terminal 1 on May 9. ST PHOTO: DALENE LOW

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The podium finishes of Yip Pin Xiu and Theresa Goh at the Rio Paralympics are admirable achievements that have generated much applause and praise among Singaporeans ("S'pore on track for best showing at Paralympics" and "Paralympics: At last, Goh wins elusive medal"; both published yesterday).

Both athletes have aptly demonstrated that their disabilities are no barrier to achieving success in the global sporting arena.

Goh's 17 years of perseverance that led to her bronze medal is an awe-inspiring feat that deserves no less recognition than Joseph Schooling's journey to his Olympic gold medal.

As Singapore increases its efforts to become a more inclusive society, it is time we gave equal recognition to our Paralympians who have strived no less than our Olympians to bring glory to our nation.

Currently, Olympic gold medallists get \$1 million in cash awards while Paralympic gold medallists get about a fifth of that amount, based on past figures.

With Malaysia announcing that it will be awarding its Paralympic gold medallists the same cash reward as its Olympic ones ("Malaysian Paralympic gold medallists to get same cash reward as Olympians"; ST Online, Sunday), Singapore's sporting authorities can definitely do better by giving equal cash rewards to our Olympians and Paralympians too.

Local companies should also step up their recognition of Paralympians in the same way our Olympians have been lauded and showered with gifts.

Such a move will go far to signal that our athletes with disabilities and the wider disability community are no less worthy of recognition for their hard work and sacrifice to not only make our nation proud, but to also live fulfilling lives as productive and motivated citizens.

**Dhevarajan Devadas**