

SPEECH BY MRS. S. RAJARATNAM, WIFE OF THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, AT THE OPENING OF THE "INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS", ORGANISED BY Y.W.C.A. AT THAI CONSULATE ON FRIDAY, 13.11.64 at 5 P.M.

My husband has asked me to open this display of International Festivals on his behalf. He regrets that he cannot be present here today, as he had hoped to, because of the Legislative Assembly meeting.

He has therefore passed on to me the task of making a speech. However you will be relieved to know that my speech will be much shorter than what I believe my husband would have made.

I must first of all congratulate those responsible for this novel idea of organising a display of festivals. In cosmopolitan Malaysia not only have we a great variety of festivals but, what is more important, we enjoy participating in other people's festivals as much as we do celebrating our own. For me this is characteristic of the mutual tolerance and respect you find in our multi-cultural Malaysia. The more the various communities participate in each other's festivals, the more quickly will we break down such barriers as exist between the different communities.

A festival is a time when a man is at his best and most human. It is a time when man feels that life is good and that his fellowmen are friends with whom he wants to share his happiness. In this display you will find different explanations - some serious, some fanciful and some transparently improbable -- as to the origins of the various festivals.

But they all have a common aim in view -- to have a jolly good time. The story behind each festival almost invariably ends up with: "...And, therefore, eat, drink and be merry".

Despite what the pessimists say mankind's capacity to find joy out of life might yet save him from extinction. This display should help us understand the various pretexts people from different cultures have invented to get fun out of life.

And because of this I have great pleasure in declaring open this display of International Festivals.