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SPEECH BY MR S RAJARATHNAM, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
AT THE OPENING OF THE 30TH SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL SALON  
OF PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ART GALLERY  
ON WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 1979

First of all let me say how pleased I am to be able once again to declare open this international exhibition of photographs organised annually by the Photographic Society of Singapore. Going by the number of requests I have had this year to open photographic exhibitions, there is no doubt that interest in photography is steadily growing. This may be a consequence of Singapore growing affluent and increased leisure. One does not have to be very rich to take up the hobby of photography but equally where the majority of people spend their time and energies working for their next meal, photography is not a hobby they can afford.

I think Singapore, given its present rate of economic growth, will encounter more and more the problem of leisure. It may be odd to talk of leisure as a problem. Nevertheless it is so simply because for many people leisure means not working - doing nothing.

In fact this is a total fallacy. No normal human being can ever achieve the state of doing nothing - except when he is asleep or dead.

Leisure without something to occupy you can be pretty boring and therefore dangerous. In many affluent countries young people with plenty of leisure time get over their boredom by turning to drugs or the excitement and rewards of crime for want of something better to do.

That is why it is something of a pity that not much attention is paid in our schools to educating people on how to use and enjoy leisure. You must teach people how to use leisure to advantage. If work is doing something to earn a living, then leisure should be doing something to get joy out of living.

In other words everyone should have a hobby of some kind to absorb his leisure hours.

Photography is one such hobby. It is a hobby for creative self-expression for those of us denied the innate talents for self-expression through painting, music, sculpturing or writing. You can through photography convey what you think and feel about many things as effectively as a painter or a musician. As a medium of communication, photography is one of the most important form of communication in the modern world. Visual communication is the medium through which we get most of our information about what is happening around us and one of the largest contributors in this respect is photographs.

That is why I am happy that the hobby of photography is attracting more and more enthusiasts - that it is filling the leisure hours of so many people.

This exhibition organised annually by the Photographic Society of Singapore will encourage many Singaporeans to discover that their hobby can be a medium for creative self-expression.

I now have great pleasure in declaring open the 30th Singapore International Salon of Photography.

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