

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR CHAN CHEE SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, ON THE OCCASION OF 1978 NATIONAL DAY  
PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION ON TUESDAY, 15 AUGUST '78 AT 5.30 P.M.  
AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL (LOWER)

Since its inception six years ago, the National Day Photographic Exhibition has been held annually to coincide with our Republic's National Day celebrations. This Exhibition is eagerly awaited by our photography enthusiasts each year.

Photography has increased in popularity in Singapore society today. This is evident from the numerous exhibitions and competitions organised and the 'mushrooming' of camera clubs in community centres and schools.

Photography to-day is so simple yet not everybody can create a good photograph. Those who have tried their hands at photography may conclude that artists are born, not made. The truth is somewhere in between.

One must first master the technic of using a camera. Then it is essential that one acquire 'an eye' for design and pattern. This can be developed and improved through training. With experience, one's sense of design can become even more acute.

Once a person has this kind of talent, the skills can be further sharpened by readings from books and courses of instruction and the exchange of ideas with fellow photographers. Constant practice is called for. This is where the camera clubs of the various community centres have an important role to play.

Mastery of the photographic art will not come without hard work and experimentation. It takes some time before one knows 'all the ropes'. The instruction one receives from courses at the community centres should be regarded as merely an introduction to the wonderful world of photography. It is up to the serious

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photographer to continue the journey, which, with application, will bring him to his destination -- as a salon photographer.

Yet the photographer and the photograph are not to be seen only as an artist and an art form. The photographer has an important role as a pictorial historian as well. He is particularly suited for the task of recording the past in pictures. All of us can feel grateful to the photographers who took pictures of early Singapore scenes. Much of our heritage would only have been recorded in words had it not been for the sometimes remarkable pictures shot by past generations. How many members of our younger generation would have believed that Bukit Timah Road, for instance, was once not much more than a cart-track running through the virgin jungle, if there did not exist photographic evidence that this was so? After all, as they say, one picture is worth a thousand words.

The role of recording the changes on the Singapore scene is very important in modern Singapore with its fast pace of development. I am sure many of us have experienced the feeling of amazement at the changes that have taken place so rapidly whenever we travel along a Singapore road which we have not used for some time. Even a space of a few months can make a vast difference. Just one example is the great change that has taken place in the Changi area since it was decided to develop the new Airport there. The entire scenery there has been modified. Or take the changes that have taken place along our East Coast. Not so long ago, there were bungalow houses fronting the sea shore. Then, land reclamation began and later multi-storey flats were built. Now the whole area is becoming green once again with the parkway being developed. If we do not preserve these changing scenes with photographs, could our children and grandchildren ever picture the kind of Singapore we now live in?

This year's National Day Photographic Exhibition has once again brought together a large assemblage of works by our own photographers. This will provide those who wish to become more competent lensmen with an opportunity to study the techniques and methods used to create such fine works.

I congratulate the various photographic organisations in Singapore and the Ministry of Culture for their joint efforts in organising this event. Perhaps the various photographic organisations in our Republic can come together more often to help raise the standard of photography, so that Singapore can earn a place in the world of photography at the international level. I have now great pleasure to declare the 1978 National Day Photographic Exhibition open.