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Women urged to guard against heart diseases

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Bakti president Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali today urged women to take special precaution against heart-related problems which are now a contributing factor to the loss of their abilities and deaths.

She said women should also disregard the misconception that they were unlikely to suffer from heart diseases, unlike men.

"As they grow older, not only does such risk become imminent, but women also face other risks resulting from high cholesterol level, high blood pressure, lack of exercise, depression, diabetes, overweight and problems related to menopause.

"Women are prone to suffer from heart diseases as their age increases, and it usually takes a long time for them to recover due to the variety of complications they pose," she said.

She was speaking at the launching of the Kuala Lumpur Heart Week '98 at the Suria KLCC.

Also present were Bakti deputy president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Heart Foundation of Malaysia (HFM) president Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin, its chairman Tan Sri Abdul Majid Ismail, the Heart Week '98 joint chairmen Dr J. S. Sambhi and Prof Aljafi Abdul Majid.

Organised by HFM with support from the Health Ministry, the programme is aimed at continuously creating greater awareness among the public for the prevention of heart diseases.

Themed "Healthy Activities for Healthy Heart", it will also provide a venue for the public to evaluate their risk factor levels, thus encouraging early prevention measures especially among the young.

Dr Siti Hasmah, who is also the wife of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, later handed over the key of a Rusa van donated by Bakti to transport family members of patients at the National Heart Institute to HFM's halfway house in Jalan Kia Peng.

The event also witnessed the simultaneous launching of the HeartWise Cardiac Rehabilitation programme, the HFM and the Hypertension and Stroke Society of Malaysia websites, and the books Malaysian Consensus Guidelines on Hypertension 1998 and Second Consensus Statement on Management of Hyperlipidaemia by the Malaysian Academy of Medicine.

Dr Siti Hasmah also reminded the people that heart diseases could be avoided through healthy lifestyles.

"The high morbidity rate from heart and cardiovascular diseases in our country is alarming.

"Thirty per cent of deaths in our country are the result of heart-related problems."

She said studies by the World Health Organisation had shown that heart-related diseases in the West had declined as a result of healthy lifestyle campaigns by the authorities and non-governmental organisations.

"Based on their experience, the Government has organised various health programmes, namely the Healthy Lifestyle campaigns on an annual basis since 1991 as well as the Rakan Muda and the 'Malaysia Cergas' programmes," she said.

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