

Excellent healthcare for women and children

Nst - 5 JUN 2002

SHAH ALAM, Tues. — Malaysia is among the top countries acknowledged by the World Health Organisation to have a high standard of healthcare for women and children, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali said today.

She said this after being awarded the Honorary Doctorate in the field of Health Science by Universiti Teknologi Mara for her contribution in improving the health level among women and children in the country.

The Prime Minister's wife received the award from UiTM chancellor the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail at the UiTM's Sri Budiman Hall.

Also present were the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo and Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin.

Dr Siti Hasmah said the fatality rate during birth for women in Malaysia had clearly declined.

"Malaysia only registers about 20 fatalities among women for every 100,000 births now, compared with seven fatalities for every 1,000 births in the 60s."

She said health programmes formulated by the Government,

including the inoculation programme for children against tuberculosis and polio, had helped in the decline.

Dr Siti Hasmah was even invited to share Malaysia's success stories on women and children's health in New York between 1998 and 1999 with others during seminars and conferences.

Despite the wide acceptance that the level of health among women and children in Malaysia was impressive, Dr Siti Hasmah urged women to continue improving their family's health.

She described the women and children's health level before the country's independence and until her retirement from the medical profession in 1979 to be 'bad', especially in the rural areas.

Among the contributing factors, she added, were ignorance on modern medicine among the women then, inadequate medical facilities and slow action when there were health complications.

Dr Siti Hasmah said she wanted to see more courses offered on healthcare supporting services like nursing and health inspectorate.

She estimated that in 2020 nine per cent of Malaysia's population would be those aged 65 and above, who would need special medical care.