

Unimas confers honorary PhD on Siti Hasmah

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KUCHING: The Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali paid tribute to her family, especially her parents, in encouraging her to succeed as a doctor.

"My mother was my main motivator. When she sent me to Singapore to enter the King Edward VII Medical College, her words to me were 'study well.'

"I was only 21 and my mother's advice and letters, full of her hopes and prayers for me, were my constant companion and motivator throughout my eight years of medical studies," she said in accepting an honorary doctorate in Science from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) yesterday.

Dr Siti Hasmah, who was conferred the degree in recognition of her contribution to community medicine and rural health, added that it was not easy to train as a doctor in the years before independence.

"I did not have science subjects at school except Mathematics and Biology, so every professional examination was a real challenge to pass.

"There was not a year when I did not have to repeat my examinations until I finally succeeded in 1955," she said.

In this, she had to thank one of her tutors who made sure she passed Physics and every repeat examination - none other than her husband Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Siti Hasmah also said medical professionals faced new challenges today in the form of new infectious diseases such as Ebola, new variants of encephalitis and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

As such, she said the medical

curriculum at universities should include issues of monitoring, preventing and controlling disease, relevant research and collaboration between health and medical agencies to enhance the quality of health-care.