

04/05/2004

It's all about diet, exercise and rest

By Loretta Ann Soosayraj

SHE fingers the pearls around her neck absent-mindedly and smiles as reporters ask her about the secret to her appearance, which belies her true age.

"I have no secrets," said Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, laughing as reporters probe for revelations of magic potions or pills. "And neither does my husband."

Dr Siti Hasmah was speaking to reporters after delivering the keynote address at the launch of the Second Malaysian Conference and Exhibition on Healthy Ageing held in Kuala Lumpur recently.

The three-day conference was organised by the Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society (MHAS) in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

She related how she and her husband, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, were once accosted by a woman while they were browsing in a local pharmacy.

The woman had watched the couple to see what they were buying. When she could not take the suspense any longer, she came up to them and asked, "So what is that RM5,000 injection you take every day to keep yourself so young?"

"There was never any injection - RM5,000 or less - to keep ourselves young," said Dr Siti Hasmah, discounting the many rumours about the secret to the youthful spring in their step. "No plastic surgery either!

"It's all about a balanced diet, exercise and sufficient rest," she says. In her keynote address, Dr Siti Hasmah acknowledged that while ageing is inevitable, there are many ways to delay its onset if there is a determination to make the relevant changes.

"Regular hours, enough sleep, moderation in eating, watching your weight, avoiding alcohol and smoking and regular exercise such as daily brisk walking, are all effective ways to keep healthy," she says.

She also made a point to say that stress and worry would add lines faster to one's face, caused by frowning, while smiling would take years off one's face.

"Good posture is vital," said Dr Siti Hasmah, who walks ram-rod straight and does not slouch even when seated in a comfy cushioned armchair, to avoid complications with the spine.

And above all, she stresses, keeping occupied even after retirement, having hobbies, and travelling whenever possible will make the golden years all the more enjoyable.

(END)