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Siti Hasmah: Make peace your mission

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali today called on women to be more involved in peace missions to help reduce strife and suffering.

Although bringing peace to the world was an uphill task because weapons were getting deadlier and powerful nations bolder, the wife of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said women should not give up.

"Every one of us should be committed to this idea of peace and contribute our efforts, no matter how small, towards the attainment of peace on Earth."

Speaking at the launch of Pan Pacific South East Asia Woman Association's International Peace Garden at Taman Rimba Bukit Kiara in Taman Tun Dr Ismail today, she said she had always hoped that some progress would be made against strife, conflicts, wars, terrorism, oppression, suffering and prejudice.

"However, global events today tell us that this is not the case. In spite of the many efforts by leaders of the United Nations, governments and non-governmental bodies, peace is still an illusion in several countries.

"We are all aware of the horrors of wars, terrorism and the like, the suffering of innocents and the damage they do to humankind and the environment. Yet, we have been unable to prevent them. I don't believe that it is destiny.

"It is human folly, greed, human failings which have their cause in the baser instincts of man."

To counter this, she said, the UN had committed itself to "laying the foundations of peace in the minds of men". She said everyone should cease regarding war, conflict, aggression and terrorism as solutions to problems.

"We must find other solutions. There are more humane choices. We must clear our hearts of anger, hatred and revenge, just as we should not be arrogant, insensitive and intolerant of others."

Dr Siti Hasmah, who is the patron of PPSEAWA, also related how women in war-torn Palestine and Israel, and Catholic and Protestant women in Northern Ireland, came together for peace and demonstrated against terrorism in their countries.

The Peace Garden, on 0.16ha of City Hall's Taman Rimba Bukit Kiara, had been mooted in 1997 by Tun Dr Siti Hasmah at a tree-planting ceremony at Taman Tasik Permaisuri, Cheras, to commemorate the 20th PPSEAWA conference.

Evoking a sense of peace, the International Peace Garden includes two gazebos equipped with water fountains and water coolers, footpaths, a lily pond, a foot reflexology path, a meditation platform for yoga activities and an open court for physical activities such as tai chi and aerobics.