

PM's wife gives keynote address on women's leadership
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Malaysian women have been given the rightful place in society because the government strategically planned their progress in a commendable and structured manner, said Rosmah Mansor.

"Malaysian women are where we are today because our government never lost sight of the importance of women," the wife of the Malaysian prime minister told an international forum in Singapore today.

She said the Malaysian government constantly endeavoured to provide an enabling environment through reforming its mechanisms and reviewing its laws, policies and regulations to address any gender disparity and inequality.

Speaking to about 200 women from the region at the forum, Rosmah, in her keynote address titled 'Women Leadership in a New Era', said the Malaysian government always listened to the voice of women when it designed these plans.

The forum is organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute and Asean Business Forum.

Also present at the one-day forum was the Singapore prime minister's wife, Ho Ching, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Lim Hwee Hua and Malaysian Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Jalil.

Rosmah said the Malaysian government had taken various measures to create a supportive and stimulating environment for the advancement of women through the formulation and implementation of pro-women policies and programmes.

She said Malaysian women had always played a critical role in both the political movement which brought the country's independence and subsequently, growth and development of the nation.

Citing that women made up nearly half of the 28.3 million population in Malaysia, Rosmah said the fairer sex was indeed, an important component of the nation's human capital and they could not be ignored.

Women better than men as managers

She said that women everywhere had long been a strong influence and playing active and leading roles in the community. Now, they had taken leadership roles globally, including the more conservative region of Southeast Asia.

She named several luminaries such as Corazon C Aquino and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who became presidents of the Philippines; former Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri; and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi who continues to lead a popular pro-democracy movement in Burma.

Rosmah noted that many factors might have contributed to this achievement but she believed that access and opportunities to education were the most significant elements which catapulted women to the fore.

She said education led to intellectual growth, skills development and confidence enhancement, to enable women to go well beyond the boundaries that limit them in their traditional roles, and also a route for their economic empowerment and social advancement.

Rosmah also cited a study which identified several qualities of leadership in women which demonstrated that they were better than men as managers, and could bring any business entity to profitability.

She quipped that many observers now had begun to wonder whether "the world would have been in the global financial crisis, if there were more women who are prudent in financial management on corporate boards and the top echelons of power, be it financial institutions, corporations or public offices."

However, Rosmah said that women, especially those who aspired to become leaders in this globalisation era, should master the information and communication technology as the emphasis now had changed from knowledge society to innovation economy.

- *Bernama*

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