

# Take care of yourself, then your children

## Raising them is a heavy duty, says Siti Hasmah

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**SERI KEMBANGAN:** Her mother could only read Jawi but that did not stop her from raising 10 children and improving herself.

"She encouraged us (the daughters) to go to schools, even though the Malays then were afraid to send their children to Christian missionary schools for fear they would become Christians.

"My mother even taught our amah from China to speak Malay," said Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali about her late mother who studied in Malay schools.

Her mother Siti Khatijah Ahmad was a woman of few words "but she worked hard".

"She was orphaned as a child in Melaka and her uncle then raised her in Kuala Lumpur.

"She was married off at 16 to my father (Mohamad Ali Taib)," she said.

The Prime Minister's wife recalled how her mother would get

on a rickshaw to attend classes on how to make pastries at the Young Women's Christian Association despite not speaking any English.

"As I was the youngest daughter, I would be taken along when she visited her relatives who were sick or had just passed away.

"She had this yellow shawl she reserved to drape over the coffins when any of our relatives died. I always got frightened when I saw the shawl," she added.

Her message for young mothers?

She said they must take care of themselves.

"God blessed us with the equipment to procreate and take care of the babies that we deliver.

"As a mother, you have to take care of yourself as it is a heavy duty to look after your children," she added.

Dr Siti Hasmah also advised women to undergo routine check-ups, mammograms and pap smears.

Mothers, she said, must be wary of unwarranted parenting informa-

tion out there such as those from the anti-vaccine groups.

"I know some mothers get so confused that they do not know what to do.

"You must be very cautious of the people who are dishing out such advice.

"There is an anti-vaccination campaign and I am appealing to all mothers to not be influenced by them because diseases that killed children during my time (as a doctor in the 50s) will come back with a vengeance," she noted.

She listed diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio, whooping cough and measles as the diseases that are now making a return due to non-vaccination.

She further advised mothers to keep a good relationship with their children "even when they have turned 60".

Dr Siti Hasmah also spoke of the 1950s when many of the Malay girls were only sent to religious schools and later married off.

"My father said 'if I educate my



**The doctor says:** Siti Hasmah playing the violin at home. She advises mothers to maintain good relations with their children, even when they are 60.

son, it is like educating himself only but if I educate my daughter, my daughter will educate a nation'.

"As our girls become educated, they understand that they must compete with the men.

"We are at the stage where the

slow tortoise is already ahead of the hare," she said.

Watch the video  
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