

# Siti Hasmah - a breast cancer survivor

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Couples who have been married for several decades have few secrets between them, if at all.

However, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali still chose to wait for a few days before telling her husband Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that she had a lump in her breast.

Sharing her experience as a breast cancer survivor who underwent treatment last March, she said doctors confirmed there was a small lump in her left breast after she underwent a mammogram and biopsy in a hospital here.

"The doctor advised me to remove the lump within a week. Initially, I did not want to tell my husband as I did not want to bother him as he was busy after returning from an overseas trip.

"Only after the results were revealed, and the doctor confirmed it was a growth, did I tell him, and he was shocked," said Dr Siti Hasmah after launching the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign for Kuala Lumpur-level (KL Pink October 2019) at Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL) yesterday.

"I remember getting the results on Monday. We waited until Friday for me to be admitted into the hospital.

"In the afternoon, there was another check-up to confirm the growth was there, on Saturday morning I went into the operations theatre, and by the afternoon the operation was over. I was allowed to go home the next day," she said.

Dr Siti Hasmah said women were generally afraid of taking screening tests for breast cancer because they were afraid of the stigma and were



**For a good cause:** Dr Siti Hasmah launching the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign for the Kuala Lumpur-level at Hospital Kuala Lumpur. Looking on is HKL director Dr Heric Corray (second from left). — Bernama

embarrassed about the process.

"Breast cancer can happen to anyone, regardless of age, from the young to someone in their 90s like me. Do not risk your life because this is a type of cancer which can be prevented if it is detected early, and the earlier we get treatment, the faster is the recovery," she said.

"Health checks are our responsibility while we are still healthy."

Meanwhile, the chair of the KL Pink October 2019 committee, Dr Ros Suzanna Ahmad Bustamam, said the campaign, which runs until 19, was targeted at women living in the People's Housing Projects and

other public housing in 10 parliamentary constituencies in Kuala Lumpur.

She said of the women who were screened, less than 30% who were given hospital appointments for further checks turned up, even though they were offered free transportation.

This development was worrying as they could potentially develop cancer, she said.

Dr Ros Suzanna said the number of breast cancer patients had increased each year, with breast cancer making up 18% of all cancer cases.

"Unfortunately, more than 40% of

patients who come for treatment are already in stages three and four.

"This campaign will not only ensure the target group undergoes screening and checks, but are given vital information about healthcare, assistance and the role of the relevant agencies which can help them increase their knowledge of breast cancer," she said. — Bernama

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