

SPEECH BY DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH  
AT THE LUNCHEON GATHERING  
ORGANISED BY THE ASEAN WOMEN CIRCLE  
AT THE INDONESIAN EMBASSY  
JALAN PEKELILING, KUALA LUMPUR  
ON TUESDAY, 12TH OCTOBER 1982  
AT 12.15 P.M.

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I am deeply honoured for being invited to this luncheon gathering and also for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with members of this Circle.

2. Let me at this juncture congratulate all members for being able to establish this Circle which I am sure will be a useful forum for wives of diplomatic officials from the ASEAN countries. I understand that this Circle is the second to be established. I am sure such Circles will be established in the other three ASEAN countries in the near future which hopefully will lead to greater understanding among wives of ASEAN diplomatic staff.

3. Each of you is surely conversant to talk on your respective countries when meeting foreigners outside ASEAN. As most of you will be accompanying your husbands to serve in other countries outside ASEAN in the future, you may be frequently asked about ASEAN, its people, its social and cultural aspects, its political development, etc. So while you are still here, it is hoped that all of you will do your best to improve your understanding on such aspects. I am confident that all members of this Circle will make efforts to learn about Malaysia as much as possible while residing in Kuala Lumpur and travelling around the country. ASEAN eventually will not only be represented by designated officials but also by their wives.

4. Women in ASEAN countries have experienced tremendous developments and recognition after the Second World War. Women today have not only played an instrumental role in family health and development, but they are also playing the role as professionals, administrators, entrepreneurs and politicians in our respective countries. Before we achieved this, women were given opportunities in education to enable them to attain the necessary mobility in work and society.

5. In this era of rapid development, the time has come to consider close cooperation among women organisations in ASEAN. Women organisations in each member-country may have certain facilities which could be extended to women in other member-countries. On top of that, regional fora can be held to establish contacts and closer ties between these organisations. For the Malaysian women organisations, it is good to learn the stronger points of woman groupings in other ASEAN countries and wherever suitable, they should be emulated.

6. In this respect, ASEAN Women Circle can play a leading role to bring leaders of these women organisations to meet and discuss regional matters and cooperation among them. Your efforts towards this end will go a long way in developing cordial relationship among women in this region who have inherited a lot of common virtues and traits.

7. Women's position in ASEAN will continue to improve and I definitely feel that we still have a lot more to achieve. Our contribution to development will continue to be recognised and appreciated. At the same time we must ensure that we have an important role to play in keeping ourselves and our family healthy. Healthy families will not only ensure that our young girls will be full of zest to improve themselves and to lead women in the future, but also will ensure a healthy, thriving and prosperous nation. As for

this Circle, I am confident that it will lead to a more meaningful role in this direction.

8. A fortnight ago, I spoke at the gathering of the Pan Pacific and Southeast Asian Women's Association of the USA in New York on various issues pertaining to women in Malaysia in particular and Asean in general, and certain aspects on health. They were very happy to note the achievements made by women in various fields including their education, economic and social standing in our societies. They were happy too to hear the prominent role played by women in this region in development. They posed some questions pertaining to drug control, genetic counselling to prevent premature births, breast feeding in this region, and about career women taking care of their young infants and children. I hope I have succeeded in explaining these issues to them. Women leaders of this region have been trying from time to time to put into proper perspective about our role and achievements. However, much can be done to ensure that women in other regions will understand and perceive us in its proper perspective.

9. I am confident that with better understanding of all aspects of ASEAN countries, most of you will be able to sell our individual country and ASEAN to the world. As wives of diplomatic officials, the opportunity for you to do so is greater.

10. Again I would like to express my gratitude to the ASEAN Women Circle in Kuala Lumpur for this opportunity to address this luncheon gathering. I wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Thank you.

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