

Penyampai : DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD. ALI
Tajuk : PENAUNG, HER WORLD CHARITY FASHION GALA
Lokasi : NIRWANA BALLROOM, HOTEL HILTON, KUALA LUMPUR
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Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan setinggi-tinggi terima kasih kepada Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri, dan Dif-dif Kehormat serta para hadirin sekalian kerana dapat melapangkan masa untuk meraikan Majlis pada malam ini. Saya mengucapkan berbanyak terima kasih kepada Jawatankuasa Penganjur Pertunjukan Her World Charity Fashion Gala yang telah memberi penghormatan kepada saya sebagai penaung untuk berucap sepatah dua kata di Majlis ini.

2. With the declaration of the International Year of the Disabled Persons last year, the problems and needs of the disabled have received greater attention - both at the international and national levels. The problems and sufferings of disabled persons, their courage and spirit in coping with the reality of a challenging world, and their efforts to contribute, and be part of an active society have been appropriately highlighted and appreciated.

3. Efforts to ease the plight of the disabled which were featured in the programme and projects of the International Year have gone a long way in inculcating a greater sense of awareness and responsibility towards the disabled among the general public . It is our responsibility to ensure that this awareness should not only continue but become more widespread.

4. Even though the International Year is has come to pass, we must realise that our efforts are only a beginning. Every effort must be made to ensure that the caring for the disabled becomes an integral part of our way of life.

5. We must also realise that the attitude of society has an important bearing in the total rehabilitation of the disabled. Ignorance, neglect and prejudice on the part of society can be more injurious and disabling than disability itself. Let us hope that Malaysian charitable and welfare institutions and us - citizens - will play our part to see to it that we are not the unnecessary source for disability.

We must do our best to reduce and eventually eliminate such negative attitudes and ignorance. Greater emphasis must be made through education and rehabilitation to enable the disabled in our society to become truly a part of us.

6. Lack of mobility and employment opportunities are also barriers to the process of rehabilitation. Looking around us we can only come to one conclusion: much more has to be done to make it possible for the disabled to actively participate in the affairs of society. Right now, the task of rehabilitation of the disabled falls heavily on the shoulders of trained personnel, such as doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

However, much of the responsibility for ensuring that our disabled could participate in community life rests with us - the ordinary man on the street, entrepreneurs, employers and professionals.

7. We don't really need high-level technology with its sophisticated and expensive answers to the problems. The actual need is simple, practical and effective measures to cater for the everyday life of the disabled. Such measures may include wider doorways and corridors, ramps in public buildings - like cinemas, banks, hotels, lift buttons with raised braille dots, sloping street pavements for wheel- chairs, public transport that is accessible to the disabled, and most of all a warm heart and a helping hand.

8. There is still a lack of employment opportunities for our disabled. This is a very sad fact of life for all of us. Self-reliance is a powerful motivating factor with its promise of a productive and meaningful role in society. I therefore appeal that managers and employers play a bigger role in providing job opportunities for the disabled.

9. With this hope, I would like to express my gratitude and congratulations to the sponsors and organizers for their untiring efforts in making this charity fashion gala a success. That they are convinced that International Year of the Disabled Persons did not and should not end on 31.12.1981, is commendable and should be applauded. Your kind presence and generous contributions tonight will definitely go a long way to achieve in making our society a better place for all.

Thank you.