

Penyampai : DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD. ALI  
Tajuk : THE ASEAN LADIES CIRCLE  
Lokasi : INTAN, PETALING JAYA  
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Distinguished Guests and Ladies, I wish to congratulate the ASEAN Ladies Circle, Kuala Lumpur, for their efforts in organising this gathering and for the invitation extended to me to join them at tea this afternoon.

2. May I also take this opportunity to welcome into the Circle our sisters from the High Commission of Brunei Darussalam, which has now joined the ASEAN fold. I am certain that their presence in the Circle would further contribute to the activities and objectives of the Circle.

3. This gathering, constitutes another significant activity of the Circle after its inception in 1982. I am very pleased to note the presence of a number of prominent and distinguished guests, as well as the encouraging turnout today. Nevertheless, I believe there is still ample room for more to join the Circle and I would like to take this opportunity to urge as many ladies as possible to join it.

4. I understand that the Circle offers wide scope for cooperative activities which covers cultural and social exchanges. The Circle, I am also told, is planning to undertake certain efforts aimed at the advancement of women in the ASEAN region. Through such activities, I believe members of Circle will have the opportunity to make their own positive contribution to complement and supplement other efforts undertaken in the pursuit of the ASEAN cause.

5. I need hardly emphasise the importance of women's contribution to the national, international and regional causes. In Malaysia, for example, women of all communities have contributed substantially and in a positive manner towards the achievement of the country's independence, and also in the cause of nation building. Active women's participation in politics, in the government service and in the social, welfare and cultural activities in Malaysia reflects their important contribution to the nation. Similar contribution by women in other countries within and without the ASEAN region is, of course, well known.

6. At the international level, the proclamation of the Decade For Women by the United Nations from 1976, calling for an increase in women's participation of all levels, is the most important acknowledgement of the importance of women's contribution to society. Likewise, ASEAN too acknowledges the importance of women's participation in the attainment of our regional objectives. This is evident from the existence of the ASEAN Women's Programme (AWP) which has a history dating back to before 1977. The participation of women in the AWP and in the ASEAN Ladies Circle in K.L., and also in the other ASEAN capitals, should provide greater interaction among the women of the region.

7. In short, the direct and positive participation of women in various activities puts us in a unique position to make our own contribution to our family, to our society, to our nation, to the region and to the world. But it is also a measure of their success that they do not sacrifice their femininity to material progress.

8. I am convinced that such a role for the women of the region, which the ASEAN Ladies Circle hopes to contribute would lead to the improvement of the social and welfare of women in terms of their health, education and economic standing, as well as the well-being of the family and society and generally to contribute to ASEAN unity and cooperation.

9. To achieve this goal, the Circle should work closely with those institutions and organisations in the country, which are directly involved in women activities. Also contacts with women organisations in other ASEAN countries would certainly be beneficial.

10. The ASEAN Ladies Circle, Kuala Lumpur is certainly placed in an ideal position to play an important role towards the promotion of relations among women in the ASEAN region considering their position.

11. I recognise that the question of funds, of course, is always an important consideration for any organisation and the ASEAN Ladies Circle is no exception. I think all of us can appreciate the necessity of

holding such a gathering as today's as one good way of raising funds. The support given to this gathering, in particular, and the ASEAN Ladies Circle's activities, in general, is therefore not misplaced, considering the Circle's position, its roles and aspirations.

12. As I understand it, proceeds collected from this gathering will be donated to charity. This further makes the support given to the gathering even more commendable and worthy of appreciation.

Distinguished Guests and Ladies, 13. May I once again congratulate the ASEAN Ladies Circle, Kuala Lumpur, for their effort and thoughtfulness and express my appreciation to all who have given their support to this worthy cause.