

Penyampai : DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD. ALI
Tajuk : A GATHERING OF SPOUSES OF DELEGATION TO THE 33RD. COMMONWEALTH
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Lokasi : SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR
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Datin Shahrizan, Chairperson of the Spouses's Programme;

Distinguished Ladies and Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is indeed a rare occasion when one has the opportunity to meet wives who hail from such diverse nations as those in the Commonwealth. I must thank the spouses's programme sub-committee for giving me this opportunity of hosting this party in honour of spouses of delegates to the 33rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. May I take this opportunity to wish you a very warm "Selamat Datang" to Malaysia.

2. I understand that during the pre-conference tours, you have been taken to nine different destinations in Malaysia.

As you are aware, Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country. It is this plural nature which contributes to its wide and varied spectrum of the Malaysian way of life. I do hope your visits will enable you to see and experience some aspects of our way of life. Varied though it may be, Malaysians share one common nature of being warm, friendly and helpful.

Distinguished Ladies,

3. Women today play an increasingly important role in nation-building. The saying that 'behind every successful man is a woman' holds true even today. As wives of politicians, there is many a time when your husbands turn to you for counsel, support and encouragement. You share his joy and jubilation and you too help bear his frustration and disappointment. Indeed, you will agree with me if I were to say that we complement and supplement their functions as politicians.

4. Malaysia as a developing country has long recognised the important role women play in national development. The voice of women has been well-represented in our Parliament through the increasing number of women members of Parliament and Senators. In fact, in the cabinet today, two cabinet ministers are women. Malaysian women are also well represented in various fields and professional. Even wives of ministers and assistant ministers are conspicuously active in social and welfare activities through their own organisation -- BAKTI, and also in others specifically of interest to them.

Distinguished Guests,

5. I had the honour and privilege of addressing wives of Austrian dignitaries and diplomats in Vienna in June and members of the Women's Council of Great Britain and wives of diplomats in the Commonwealth Institute, London in July recently, of the drug problems in Malaysia and the role of NGO's in the prevention programmes.

6. I would be failing in my duty if I do not touch on this subject of drug abuse in our society today. Never has the world seen such a more destructive scourge as drug abuse and drug addiction. It is no more a peculiar problem of a particular country. Drug abuse has reached an international dimension. Malaysia has declared an all out effort to tackle the problem of drug abuse and drug addiction and its tough drug laws are aimed at eradicating this problem.

Large sums of money and extensive manpower have been mobilised to implement a systematic rehabilitation programme as well as to enforce the laws. However, prevention is better than cure. It is here that as mothers, we play an important part in advising, counselling and guiding our children away from drugs. Indeed drug addiction among children can be prevented if parents, particularly we as

mothers, play our role effectively. The people in Malaysia, particularly, the mothers here are very concerned about the drug problem and share this concern with mothers all over the world.

7. On arrival from Vienna, in June, 15,000 people of all walks of life, young and old, were at the Airport to welcome us home. They put their hands together in prayer for the protection and prevention of young people from the evil of drugs not only in Malaysia but throughout the world.

Dear Ladies,

8. Let me come back to a more lighter vein. Shopping has always been a passion for women and I believe it is no exception to you too. In Malaysia we have a lot to offer. I understand that you will have the opportunity to see our batik, songket, pewter, orchids and a multitude of other handicraft which will help you to remember Malaysia.

Whether or not you have been here before or this is your maiden visit to Malaysia, let this not be your last. Do come back again and you will find that Malaysia is ever so fascinating and welcoming.

Distinguished Ladies,

9. Gracing our function today is the traditional musical group of the University of Malaya. They played the music of 'Melayu Asli' and 'Ghazal', another two areas of Malaysia's myriad of cultural heritage. I call on you to join me in giving them a big hand. In conclusion, I wish you a very pleasant stay and may you take home with you fond and pleasant memories of Malaysia.

Thank you.