

Penyampai : DATO SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BT HJ MOHD ALI
Tajuk : THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 25TH ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE
MALAYSIAN PAEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION
Lokasi : PUTRAJAYA MARRIOTT HOTEL
Tarikh : 05-09-2003

Congratulations to the Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA) on your 25th anniversary. I am honoured and pleased that you have invited me to officiate such a momentous occasion.

2. It seems like only yesterday that a small group of dedicated doctors came together with the aim of elevating the health and welfare of children in the country. This marked the beginning of the Malaysian Paediatric Association.

3. Since then, I've watched the MPA grow over the years. Its voice has become louder and clearer, its hold on paediatrics and child health stronger. It has established itself as a partner to all the people involved in the care of children - other paediatricians, health professionals, parents and most of all the children themselves.

4. At the same time, the nation has seen a vast improvement in healthcare systems and practices. This is reflected in the decreasing infant mortality rate, the maternal mortality rate and improvement in other health indicators.

5. There was a time when there were only a handful of paediatricians in the country. Paediatrics was a new specialty and not as well established within the medical community. But now with nearly 400 paediatricians trained in various subspecialties, paediatrics is a force to be reckoned with. Congratulations to the MPA for having contributed to a much larger paediatric base in Malaysia, with many trained specialists to care for children.

6. I understand that the professional development of its members is a key area of MPA's activities. Today's congress is a highlight of the MPA activity, one that is much looked forward to by old and new paediatricians. This is especially auspicious since it marks the 25th anniversary of the Association. I am especially happy to note that many of the distinguished speakers in your congress are homegrown. This reflects the maturity of the association.

7. I would like to congratulate MPA in stretching their arms to look into the welfare of adolescents. With the organisation of the National Symposium on Adolescent Health, MPA has highlighted adolescents as a special group with special needs. I am happy to note that adolescent health may soon be a subspecialty by itself with paediatricians being sent for training in adolescent health. Another laudable milestone is the promise of having special wards for adolescents in major hospitals.

8. There are so many health and social issues pertaining to children and adolescents, such as drug and substance abuse, tobacco related advertisements targeted at youths, child abuse and neglect, breastfeeding issues as well as children's rights. MPA has taken a strong stand on these issues and fought to be heard, especially in shaping national policies towards change.

9. Other medical and allied health professionals also play a crucial role in the care of children - obstetricians & gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, nutritionists, physiotherapists and many more. In forging partnerships with these professionals, MPA clearly believes in taking a holistic approach to improving the status of children in the country.

10. I am pleased to see that MPA does not merely stand upon the lofty portals of science. Instead, they strive to make a real difference by reaching out to all levels of the community, particularly the underprivileged families.

11. I would like to commend the doctors who have devoted time outside of their professional realm and go beyond the call of duty to be involved in community work.

12. Indeed, parents need as much guidance as they can get. I speak from personal experience, having raised my own children! It can be a challenge, and as such, parents appreciate practical recommendations that will help them overcome the daily challenges of caring for children. I am sure that MPA sees it as a way to empower parents with the confidence and knowledge to make the right decisions for their children. MPA has also organised 'Positive Parenting Seminars' in four major towns with the aim of helping parents go through the parenting process with knowledge and confidence.

13. It seems that I will have the pleasure of launching another of MPA's such efforts for parents - The Total Child book. As a parenting book developed by the MPA in collaboration with the Nutrition Society of Malaysia, I am sure that Malaysian parents will find it an invaluable resource. Well done MPA, for such valuable contribution to the parents of Malaysia.

14. We entrust our dreams and ambitions into the hands of our children. Therefore, we must protect them, keep them healthy and build a solid foundation for their future, so that they will carry on the legacy that we leave for them.

15. Once again, I congratulate the Malaysian Paediatric Association, for your efforts and achievements in promoting child health and well being in Malaysia. It gives me great pleasure to officially open the 25th Annual Congress of the MPA.