

**SPEECH**  
**BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH, MALAYSIA**  
**Y.B DATUK SERI DR. S. SUBRAMANIAM**  
**ON THE OCCASION OF:**  
**THE LAUNCH OF “THE HEART 2014” PROGRAMME & EXHIBITION**  
**ON 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014**  
**@ MID-VALLEY EXHIBITION CENTRE**

SALUTATIONS

*Yang Berbahagia Datuk Dr. J.S. Sambhi*  
*Chairman & Founder, Yayasan Jantung Malaysia (The Heart Foundation of Malaysia)*

*Yang Berbahagia Dato’ Dr Rosli Mohd Ali*  
*President, National Heart Association of Malaysia (NHAM)*

*Dato’ Koh Yaw Hui*  
*Director & CEO, Great Eastern Life Assurance*

*Mr Ong Lam Huat*  
*CEO, Legosan (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (Biogrow Oat BG22)*

*Members of the mass media*

*Honoured guests*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Salam 1 Malaysia and a very good morning to all of you.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the organizers, Yayasan Jantung Malaysia (YJM), National Heart Association of Malaysia (NHAM), Women’s Heart Health Organisation (WH<sup>2</sup>O) and Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) for inviting me to officiate at the launch and opening of the ‘The Heart Exhibition 2014’. I am most happy to be a part of this significant event to promote heart-health amongst our citizens, which is an issue close to my heart.

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I would also like to congratulate YJM, NHAM, WHO and IJN for making this Heart Programme possible and to all of you who have come in aid of a very important public campaign. This is truly the Malaysia spirit we are seeing today...working together for the better health of the nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you may know, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) which include heart disease and stroke, is the world's number one killer, claiming millions of lives prematurely. In fact, according to the World Heart Federation and the World Health Organisation, they cause 17.3 million deaths each year and the numbers are steadily rising. By 2030, it is expected that 23 million people will die from CVDs annually – that is more than the population of Australia alone!

Heart disease and stroke are part of non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cancer that make up two-thirds of all deaths globally. They are largely due a sedentary and fast paced lifestyle, coupled with unhealthy dietary intake and increased alcohol and tobacco consumption. Overall, more than 90% of patients with heart disease have at least one these cardiovascular disease risk factors: smoking, hypertension, overweight or obese, high cholesterol levels, sedentary lifestyle and diabetes.

Back on our home front, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of deaths in hospitals under the Ministry of Health, where about 35% of deaths occur in individuals aged less than 60 years. In Kuala Lumpur Hospital, 1000 stroke cases are seen per year with 30% - 35%, deaths due to stroke<sup>1</sup>. There are 8000 new heart patients annually. It is no wonder that heart disease has been the number killer in the country for over past three decades!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.myhealth.gov.my/myhealth/index.php/dewasa/01penyakit0102disease02/01penyakit-kardiovaskular-cvd0102cardiovascular-disease-cvd02>

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According to a first-of-its-kind report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, about one in four U.S. deaths from heart disease could be avoided with better prevention efforts and treatment.

The disabilities and deaths from CVDs are occurring amongst the economically productive members of our population. In addition to its negative impact on the quality of life, CVDs increase the economic burden of individuals, families and communities, and reduce the productivity of the country. This has also put a tremendous strain on our public health care system which is already over-stretched with relatively expensive treatment and long-term rehabilitative care.

It is a myth that heart disease and stroke only affect older, male, populations. In reality, CVDs affect as many women as men however, their risk is seriously underestimated. There is no denying the fact that heart disease is the number one killer of women, causing 1 in 3 female deaths. This figure may not sound like much, but it actually works out to around one death per minute! It is vital that women learn the truth about their CVD risk and take action to protect themselves and their family.

In addition, many adults and families spend more time eating out and the younger generations are opting for fast food. All this has resulted in adults and children suffering from issues like overweight, obesity, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood glucose levels that are all risk factors for heart disease.

The Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) is very concerned about the growing number of Malaysian adults and children who suffer from cardiovascular diseases. It is unfortunate that while we enjoy the benefits of affluence, the current state of our heart health is slowly declining.

Due to our complacent attitude towards health and nutrition, it is no surprise that cardiovascular diseases are on the rise today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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I believe that the increasing numbers of CVD cases and NCDs in the country are largely due to the lack of proper knowledge about heart health and CVD risk factors. For example, many of us don't know that prolonged stress is one of the factors that increase the risk of heart diseases and other serious diseases.

The Ministry of Health, as custodian of the health of the nation, is fully focused and committed to managing CVDs and NCDs at the primary health care level. In the recently published 10th Malaysia Plan 2011-2015, the government acknowledges that unhealthy lifestyle is contributing to the increasing burden of NCD. We have to tackle the three main modifiable NCD risk factors i.e., unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and smoking, simultaneously. Therefore, for the next 5 years, there will be a shift towards wellness and disease prevention. This is also in line with the objectives of the National Strategic Plan for NCD (NSP-NCD), a prevention and control program that was developed in 2000 to tackle the increasing prevalence of NCD and NCD risk factors more effectively and efficiently.

One of the programmes launched under the non-communicable disease control program by the Ministry in promoting the wellness concept is the cardiovascular disease training programme. Under this programme, individuals who are 35 years and above or those who are at high risk of CVD will be screened. The programme started in 1999 and the number of patients who had been screened increase annually. The Ministry has also launched various other campaigns to promote healthy lifestyle and provide information on chronic diseases like CVD as well as provided guidelines on managing cardiovascular-related diseases.

The government has also implemented various nutrition intervention programmes with the help of the Ministry of Health, other government agencies and ministries, professional health bodies and organization and private sectors.

The National Plan of Action for Nutrition Malaysia (NPANM) for 2006 – 2015 is the blueprint for nutrition in the country. In line with National Nutrition Policy of Malaysia, the objectives of NPANM 2006-2015 are to achieve and maintain optimal nutritional well-being of Malaysians,

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enhance the nutritional status of the population, and prevent and control diet-related non-communicable diseases.

The Malaysian Government has recognized the urgency to prioritize the prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases along with other non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cancer. However, despite our best efforts in continually encouraging Malaysians to adopt healthy eating habits, lead active lifestyles and maintain healthy body weight, we realize that we cannot accomplish this mission on our own.

It is important that efforts to fight CVDs do not rest only with the government, policy makers and global leaders. Everyone can and should contribute. As the famous Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu once said and I quote, *“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”*. Therefore, by making a few simple lifestyle changes, I hope that all Malaysians can live longer, healthier lives through the prevention of heart disease and stroke.

I would also like to urge the public to go for health screening regularly in order to know the status of your health, especially with regards to CVDs. You should also protect your heart from additional harm by avoiding alcohol and smoking. Change your lifestyle now and set a good example for your children in order to prevent CVDs from taking over not just your life, but theirs as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our efforts to encourage Malaysians to adopt healthy eating habits and lead active lifestyles to avoid CVDs cannot be accomplished without good teamwork. To achieve this, we need strong involvement between ministries and many other stakeholders, including professional bodies, NGOs, food and beverages manufacturers and other related sectors. It is because of this that we are so happy and grateful to The Heart Programme and the organizations behind it, namely, Yayasan Jantung Malaysia, National Heart Association of Malaysia, Women’s Heart Health Organisation and Institut Jantung Negara for their remarkable initiative and mission over the past years in highlighting on heart health to the nation.

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The Heart Programme is in tune with, and is an ideal complement to our efforts in preventing chronic diseases around the country. The Ministry hopes that The Heart Programme will help empower even more Malaysians with accurate knowledge of the risk factors for heart disease and actions can be taken to address these risk factors.

We are also pleased to see the private sectors, such as Great Eastern Life Assurance, Biogrow Oat BG22, Nestle Products Sdn Bhd and other Platinum Sponsors, work together with these bodies as exemplary corporate organizations, in the spirit of corporate social responsibility to spread our message. I have been informed that such collaborations have enabled The Heart Programme to be successfully implemented through publication of educational materials, the organisation of this Exhibition and the conduct of several out-reach activities to the community. Their sincere efforts in this endeavour prove that these bodies are indeed committed to pushing a healthy lifestyle to the forefront.

To all Esteemed Sponsors, I hope that you will continue to lend your support to The Heart Programme in the years to come. Thank you to all you sponsors and collaborators who have lent their backing to make this year's programme a success.

Last but not least, I hope that The Heart Programme will continue to be one of the major health awareness events which serve to commemorate World Heart Day annually, so that more Malaysians will continue to benefit from your activities.

On that note, it gives me great pleasure to officially launch *The Heart 2014 Programme* and the Exhibition with its theme 'Live Great from The Heart'.

Thank you.