

# PARLIAMENT

MALAYSIA

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THE FIRST MEETING OF THE FIRST SESSION  
OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT  
29 APRIL 2008

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ROYAL ADDRESS BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
SERI PADUKA BAGINDA  
YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG  
AL-WATHIQU BILLAH TUANKU MIZAN ZAINAL ABIDIN IBNI  
ALMARHUM SULTAN MAHMUD AL-MUKTAFI BILLAH SHAH

Bismillaahir Rahmanir Rahiim  
Al-hamdulillahi Rabbil 'Alamin Wabihi Nasta'in  
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullaahi Wabarakaatuh  
and Regards

**President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Members of the Senate and Members of the House of  
Representatives.**

Alhamdulillah, We express our utmost gratitude to Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, for it is with His Munificence, and with His Leave, that we are gathered here today for the Opening Ceremony of the First Session of the Twelfth Parliament.

2. We are grateful to Allah, the Almighty that the twelfth general election has been conducted successfully in accordance with the tenets of democracy. We would like to express Our appreciation to the Election Commission, the Royal Malaysian Police and all parties involved in ensuring the smooth conduct of the general election. We express Our thanks to the people who have fulfilled their obligations and exercised their rights to elect a government.

3. We would like to congratulate the elected Members of the House of Representatives and We hope that the Honourable Members will perform their duties and responsibilities commendably with dedication, sincerity and honesty, demonstrating exemplary conduct for their own dignity and that of the nation. The people's respect and confidence in Parliament as the country's supreme legislative body is contingent upon the role of the Honourable Members. Let this august House be a platform for conveying constructive criticisms and sound opinions. Honourable Members should have national interest as their primary objective, and not make this august House a forum for the furtherance of one's political interests. Active participation and quality debates should be the main priority of the Honourable Members.

4. We congratulate the Prime Minister for successfully steering the country's economy despite the many external challenges such as a slowdown in the world's economic growth and soaring prices of crude oil and foodstuffs, coupled with stiff competition in trade and investment.

5. The 6.3% growth of the country's economy in 2007 surpassed the 6% target, while the per capita income rose to more than RM23,000. The inflation rate remained low at 2% with the unemployment rate at 3.3%. The fiscal deficit continues to decrease to 3.2% of the Gross Domestic Product. As a result of the surplus in external trade account and the increase in capital inflow, the net international reserves has grown to RM390.1 billion, capable of financing retained imports for 9.7 months – a development which further strengthens the value of the ringgit.

Honourable Members,

6. We commend the Government's resoluteness in implementing development projects under the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. As of March 2008, a sum of RM81.7 billion, equivalent to 40.8% of the total allocation of RM200 billion has been spent, resulting in a positive effect on the country's economy especially in the construction sector and its related industries.

7. We hope this sustainable rate of growth can be maintained. The Mid-Term Review of the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan should focus on enhancing the country's resilience and competitiveness, while reassessing priorities with regards to development programmes and projects in order to realise the five thrusts of the National Mission.

8. We are pleased to note that Malaysia has been selected as the world's tourism destination of choice for two consecutive years. Undoubtedly, the 2007 Visit Malaysia Year Campaign managed to attract

foreign tourists to our shores and generated revenue beyond the target. Such a success has not only helped to garner a larger surplus in the travel account, but also for the first time in the country's history, contributed to the surplus in the services account balance of payments since the second quarter of 2007. In view of this, the campaign has been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to explore new markets and create more attractive tourism products.

9. The success of our national athletes in international championships such as squash, body-building and bowling has spurred a greater interest in sports among the people. Hopefully these achievements will propel the athletes to forge history by winning the country's first gold medal in the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

10. We believe that we are poised for greater success, akin to that of the advanced countries, as we enter the second phase of the fifty-years after independence. Such measure of success is achievable through hard work and the support of all parties, as well as maintaining the collaboration between leaders and the people.

Honourable Members,

11. It is Our hope that the country's success thus far will be bolstered with efforts to enhance the country's resilience and competitiveness. This can be done by consolidating the implementing agencies and the public service delivery system by having world-class human capital, national

solidarity and public harmony, peace and prosperity, and international networking to ensure that the country is able to withstand the challenges of globalisation. Innovation as well as efficient and effective technology management would also warrant attention to create a new source of economic growth. Hence, the formulation of the National Innovation Action Plan to boost the country's competitiveness.

12. The private sector too must play its role to spearhead economic growth of the country. The Private Finance Initiative has been introduced to increase the participation of the private sector in providing infrastructure and public facilities based on smart partnerships between the public and private sectors and financial institutions.

13. Besides expanding existing markets, creating new products and services, forging smart partnerships and enhancing efficiency and productivity, the increasingly challenging external environment call for the exploration of new sources of economic growth and markets. Hence, Our Government will continue to confer with our trading partners at the bilateral, multilateral and regional levels in order to expand the products and services market, and attract more investment. In addition, the services sector has been singled out for revitalisation to heighten further economic growth, and measures will be taken to encourage its growth and liberalisation for increased competitiveness.

Honourable Members,

14. Our Government will strive to develop the agricultural sector in line with the objective of making it the third generator of economic growth by commercialising traditional agriculture. Pivotal to this will be land amalgamation and rehabilitation and agro-based industries to increase the income of the farming community. The Government will also undertake to increase private sector investment, including from Government-linked companies, subsidiaries of agricultural agencies, associations and cooperatives of farmers and fishermen.

15. We hope that research and development programmes will be stepped up to create new applications for commercialisation through downstream activities so as to sustain the competitiveness of the plantation and commodities sector. For example, not only can oil be extracted from the fruits of the oil palm, but other parts of the tree can also be turned into various products. Higher productivity can be attained with the production of new, better quality clones, the latest technology and good agricultural practices put to optimum use by planters and small-holders. Within the sector, new sources of growth will continue to be explored such as kenaf, sago and castor oil plant and bio-composite.

16. We are happy that Malaysia is recognised as being at the forefront of halal certification. The application of the Malaysian Halal Standard will prevail at the international level, particularly among member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. The establishment of the Halal Industries Development Corporation and Halal Park reinforces the

promotion of Malaysia as the region's halal hub. Moreover, it will create synergies for the development of new halal products and services in several states while increasing the country's halal exports in the international markets.

Honourable Members,

17. Improvements to the Public Service delivery system has begun to produce results, for example, Malaysia's international passport and MyKad can now be processed within 3 hours and 24 hours respectively at the main branches of the relevant department while payment for Government bills can be cleared within 14 days. Presently, 1,174 services, covering enquiries, information, submission of forms and payments are made available online by various Government agencies to serve the public and business community. The establishment of one-stop centres has not only created a business-friendly environment, but also facilitated the approval of various applications and reduced the cost of doing business.

18. We are pleased that the Civil Service will endeavour to enhance its efficiency. The declaration of the Malaysian Civil Service Commitment 2008 testifies to this. Its concept of "One Service, One Delivery and No Wrong Door Policy" to achieve its objectives is supported by six principal thrusts with emphasis on the provision of a first-class civil service as an ongoing agenda that promises more improvements.

19. The people want quality and prompt service amidst a conducive environment, regardless of time and place when they deal with the Government. We hope that these improvements will continue to meet the needs of the people and the investors.

20. The economic achievements and development thus far are pointless if corruption, abuse of power and digression prevail. Therefore, as announced by the Prime Minister, measures to eradicate corruption will be intensified by restructuring the Anti-Corruption Agency with the setting up of a Commission on the Prevention of Corruption, the Parliamentary Committee on the Prevention of Corruption and the Corruption Prevention Advisory Board, as well as increasing the number of anti-corruption officers. We hope these will enhance the effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the Government's efforts in combating corruption in this country.

21. Our Government is committed towards enhancing the country's judicial system so that it remains just, respected and impartial, consistent with the aspiration of the people, as announced recently by the Honourable Prime Minister. An effective and fair judicial system is imperative for the people to continue having faith in the country's legal system. Consequently, a Judicial Appointments Commission will be formed to evaluate and select suitable candidates for the position of judges or senior judges for the consideration of the Honourable Prime Minister, prior to submission for Our consultation with the Conference of Rulers.

Honourable Members,

22. The development of quality human capital, as one of the five thrusts of the National Mission, is a principal agenda in the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. In the volatile climate of globalisation, abundant natural resources and sophisticated technology alone will not guarantee success and advancement. Knowledgeable, highly skilled and innovative human capital, possessing positive work ethics and integrity is equally crucial for the country to enjoy a better standard of life in the future.

23. Of importance is the development of a first-class human capital which hinges upon education and training. In its study, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris found that children below five years old undergoing the National Early Childhood Education and Care Programme or PERMATA acquire a higher level of emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual development and better personal management and communication skills. Therefore, the curriculum and learning methodology of PERMATA should be applied throughout the country.

24. We are pleased with the Government's commitment to develop human capital at the level of schools and higher education through the Educational Development Master Plan and National Higher Education Strategic Plan. We have confidence that these two plans will help realise the National Mission and boost the national education system, more so with the establishment of one or two Apex Universities.

25. Quality human capital will be enhanced among the country's youth through training programmes at the National Skill Institute for Youth with the National Dual Training System aimed at producing a skilled, competent and competitive labour force capable of meeting industry needs.

26. In tandem with human capital development and the objective of Vision 2020, broadband infrastructure is requisite in the pursuit of a knowledge-based economy. In this regard, Our Government has aimed to increase the household broadband penetration rate to 50 percent by the year 2010.

Honourable Members,

27. Thus far, political stability and racial solidarity have been the cornerstone of the nation's success. We call upon all parties to bear the responsibility of ensuring that all races remain united whilst resisting any attempt at dividing the people.

28. On the whole, We are satisfied with the performance of the Royal Malaysian Police in safeguarding national security and peace. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement, and steps are and will be taken to make the Royal Malaysian Police a premier force. These include recruiting additional staff, building new training centres, providing quality human capital and logistical needs, and setting up police stations in housing estates. We urge that the people too be responsible for preserving peace and harmony by joining the Rakan Cop, People

Volunteer Corps, Neighbourhood Committee and Voluntary Patrolling Scheme.

29. The Malaysian Armed Forces continue to play a vital role in defending the country's sovereignty, especially at the borders. The formation of the Border Regiment attests to the Government's policy of providing comprehensive security to prevent cross-border crimes such as smuggling and the entry of illegal immigrants, while protecting the well-being of the people. We are pleased that our territorial waters are safer and well guarded with the establishment of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency two years ago. This has contributed to a decline in piracy and bolstered the international community's confidence in the security of our territorial waters.

Honourable Members,

30. In the implementation of development projects, Our Government will ensure that they will benefit all the people. Economic development is not confined to certain areas only, but encompasses the whole country. We hope, therefore, that the implementation of the five regional economic development corridors will invigorate economic activities, raise the standard of living, eradicate poverty and narrow the income gap between ethnic groups, states and regions. More than 12 million jobs will be created in the various economic sectors. Apart from the development of infrastructure and public amenities, various incentives are in place to draw the participation of the private sector, particularly local investors. We are happy to note that to date RM33 billion worth of investment is

ready to be invested in real estate, tourism and recreation in the Iskandar Malaysia region.

31. We are proud that the Government has successfully reduced the poverty rate to 3.6% compared to 75% when the country attained its independence. With the decline of hardcore poverty to 0.7%, We are confident that it will be eradicated by the year 2010. However, various programmes will remain, including the Strategic Planning and Enhancement of Poverty Eradication Programme, People's Well Being Development Scheme, as well as the latest, High Impact Rural Development Programme, an agropolitan concept, that is an agriculture-based integrated development project incorporating human resource, economic and physical development.

32. Our Government is also aware of the poverty in urban areas. The Urban Poverty Information System has been developed to effectively coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Urban Poverty Eradication Programme. Well-Being Centres have been set up to help the poor and hardcore poor in urban areas to register and seek assistance as well as participate in the Skill Building Programme for Exemplary Families.

33. Our Government realises that the low income group comprising of small-time traders, fishermen and farmers faces difficulty in obtaining housing loans because of irregular income. As such, the Housing Loan Guarantee Scheme has been launched to enable them to purchase low and medium cost houses.

34. FELDA is a showcase of the Government's success in eradicating poverty. Now, FELDA is bent on empowering its second and third generation through eight new initiatives, involving an allocation of RM109 million. It will also continue to enhance its non-plantation based activities which will be expedited to develop entrepreneurs in small and medium-scale industries and craft. FELDA's exemplary achievements should serve as a model for other land, plantations and rural development agencies.

35. We are pleased that the Government's determined efforts in eradicating poverty has been recognised by the United Nations. Such recognition has prompted the Government to intensify its efforts with the cooperation of the private sector, non-governmental organisations, community leaders and target groups. We are indeed pleased with the Government's introduction of the Corporate Social Responsibility programme, and We urge the private sector to support it.

36. Our Government will persist in its efforts to provide basic amenities in rural areas especially in Sabah and Sarawak. Development in education, economy and basic amenities for the Orang Asli communities will be accelerated, while development of rubber and oil palm plantations will be the main strategy for supplementing their income and releasing them from the shackles of poverty.

37. In striving to improve the people's level of health and modernise the national health system, Our Government is also mindful of traditional practices which have been proven effective for the treatment of diseases.

As such, measures have been taken to integrate scientifically proven traditional and complementary practices into the national health system. To ensure a cleaner, healthier and safer environment, solid waste disposal and public cleaning services will be taken over from the local authorities for more effective management.

38. In the transportation sector, Our Government will step up its efforts to improve the public transportation system especially in the main cities and inter-cities, as well as rail-based and air transport. In view of the growing number of airline passengers, including those of budget airlines, a permanent low-cost carrier terminal will be built at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang. Hopefully these will further promote national integration and the tourism industry.

Honourable Members,

39. We are proud that Our Government has been able to provide subsidies to curb the rising prices of goods and lessen the burden faced by the people. In 2008, more than RM36 billion has been allocated for subsidies and other forms of assistance including gas, diesel, petroleum, agriculture, health and education from pre-school to higher education, as well as assistance to senior citizens, the disabled and single mothers. Our Government will continue to provide these forms of assistance for the well-being of the people.

40. The high price of oil on the international market has a direct impact on the price of goods and services. Therefore, the Government has instituted measures such as price control and intensifying enforcement to curb the price increase and safeguard the welfare of the people, especially those in the low income bracket. Naturally, these measures alone will not suffice. The people should be prudent and spend in places offering reasonable prices.

41. We regret that there are certain quarters who abuse the Government's subsidy for essential goods by hoarding and smuggling the items outside the country just to rake in bigger profits. Such despicable act causes hardship and tantamount to depriving the rights of the people.

Honourable Members,

42. Globalisation and urbanisation have wreaked changes in the economy, socio-culture and value system of a society. These changes need to be tackled through the integrated action and commitment of all parties. A notable development is the timely implementation of the Social Welfare Transformation aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the delivery system for its target group, extending its reach to the grassroots and facilitating their integration into the society.

43. The well-being of the *ummah* is underpinned by spiritual development. We are very concerned about social ills such as drug addiction, deviation of faith and the like which tarnish the sanctity of

Islam. Firm actions need to be taken to ensure that spiritual and human capital developments are consistent with the *Islam Hadhari* approach.

44. The diverse arts, culture and heritage derived from the different ethnic groups represent a valuable asset for Malaysia. Our Government will keep on implementing programmes to popularise, revitalise and preserve the various arts, culture and heritage with emphasis on the commercialisation of arts and heritage products to provide opportunities for the people to improve their standard of living.

45. The global warming phenomenon resulting in higher temperatures and imbalance in the ecosystem is an international concern. Our Government will place greater significance on sustainable development, in line with the recognition accorded to Malaysia as one of the world's twelve countries for mega biodiversity. Our commitment to the Kyoto Protocol entails that it will promote the use of renewable energy sources through the Renewable Energy Action Plan.

Honourable Members,

46. International networking, apart from being central for the preservation of peace and stability, will augment the country's prosperity and competitiveness. We are proud of the continual success to uplift the country's image and credibility. Malaysia's relations with other countries, her neighbours in particular, will go from strength to strength in a multitude of fields.

47. We are delighted that Malaysia continues to play a prominent role in international organisations. That the country sits on UNESCO's Executive Board, UNICEF, United Nations Economic and Social Council, Board of the International Maritime Organisation, and International Civil Aviation Organisation, and as Chairman of the United Nations Commission for Science and Technology For Development speak volumes of the international community's confidence in Malaysia's ability to contribute towards the furtherance of world peace. We hope that bilateral and multilateral cooperation will be stepped up for peace, prosperity and well-being of the people in the years to come.

48. We have been informed that the country has handed over the Chairmanship of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to Senegal after being at its helm since October 2003. During that time, Malaysia has succeeded in elevating the image of Islam in the eyes of the world to counteract the negative perception alluded to it by certain parties. Additionally, Malaysia had taken on several socio-economic programmes for the benefit of Muslims. We are extremely proud of Malaysia's contributions, and believe that Malaysia will continue to play an active role despite no longer being at the helm.

Honourable Members,

49. We value the contribution of the Civil Service, especially those who serve beyond the norms of duty in the face of threats and risks. The sacrifice by the Royal Malaysian Police and the Malaysian Armed Forces in preserving peace and security is also deeply appreciated.

50. The general election has passed, and the people has once again given their mandate to the Government to govern the country. Honourable Members must demonstrate character and conduct becoming of this august House and to uphold its good name. Carry out the trust that the people has placed in you by participating actively and responsibly in the spirit of parliamentary democracy.

51. Lastly, We call upon all Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to execute the duties and responsibilities that have been entrusted by the people with sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness, credibility and integrity for the good of the country.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah,

Wassalamu Alaikum Warahmatullaahi Wabarakaatuh.