



**Embargoed Release**

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**SPEECH ORIGINALLY DELIVERED IN MALAY**

**SPEECH BY MDM RAHAYU MAHZAM, CHAIRPERSON OF THE *BULAN BAHASA* COMMITTEE, MEMBER OF THE MALAY LANGUAGE COUNCIL, SINGAPORE AND MP FOR JURONG GRC, AT THE LAUNCH OF *BULAN BAHASA (MALAY LANGUAGE MONTH) 2018, ON SATURDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER, AT WISMA GEYLANG SERAI.***

Guest of Honour, Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education

Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Chairman of the Malay Language Council, Singapore

Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

Parliamentary colleagues

Ms Tan Gee Keow, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Ms Yeoh Chee Yan, Chairman, National Heritage Board

Ms Chang Hwee Nee, Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage Board

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen



1. Welcome to the Launch of *Bulan Bahasa* 2018, and thank you for taking the time to join us at Wisma Geylang Serai this afternoon.
2. As everyone would know, we celebrate a very important milestone for the Malay Language Council, Singapore, today. This year's *Bulan Bahasa* marks 30 years, since the first edition was launched in 1988.
3. When I started helming the *Bulan Bahasa* initiative for the Council two years ago, I knew that it would be my duty to continue the good work done by those before me. Each and every one of them has made significant contributions to the development of Malay language and *Bulan Bahasa* in Singapore.
4. Encik Sidek Saniff helmed *Bulan Bahasa* in its initial years in 1988 as Singapore implemented the standardisation of Malay language or *bahasa baku*. This effort was continued by Encik Mohamad Maidin Packer Mohd in the 1990s and till today, Malay language students practise *bahasa baku* in schools.
5. The focus on language and literature was emphasised during the chairmanship of the late Encik Harun Ghani and Encik Yatiman Yusof as *Bulan Bahasa* developed even further under Encik Hawazi Daipi, with initiatives such as *Rakan Bahasa*.
6. To ensure that the community everywhere in Singapore, would have a chance to deeply appreciate the Malay language, Encik Masagos Zulkifli and Encik Zaqy Mohamad rallied the support of the MAECs to organise *Bulan Bahasa* in the



heartlands. Encik Masagos and Encik Zaqy also held a most memorable edition at Gardens by the Bay for SG50.

7. Hence, it would be important to capture the history of *Bulan Bahasa* with this 30-year milestone. *Duta Bahasa* Encik Riz Sunawan, conducted interviews with many interesting oral recounts from our pioneers, leaders, *Duta Bahasa* and *Rakan Bahasa* as they shared their experience and valuable stories. We will share an excerpt of this video, later.
8. As I took on the responsibility to continue the mission of Bulan Bahasa, I was also keenly aware that our approaches to promoting our Mother Tongue would need to evolve with the times, so we can capture the attention of a younger bilingual and even bi-literate generation that enjoys much at their fingertips, who are so much more exposed but at the same time, also more 'distracted', who are more digital natives and technologically savvy than the generations gone by, and who are more aware of global matters. The challenge would be for us to ensure that the Malay language remains rich, relevant and interesting to these times.
9. It would be important to put together commemorative efforts befitting of such a long-lasting and meaningful initiative for our Malay community that would also chart out directions going forward.
10. Every year, we strive to do more. For example, this year, there were efforts to enhance the *Rakan Bahasa* activities. We introduced *Kembara Rakan Bahasa* – an activity card for our *Rakan Bahasa*, and organised the Malay Newsmaker Competition, where students use the application to present news reports.



11. The Bulan Bahasa theme song, *Bahasa Menjunjung Budaya*, was written by the late Cikgu Muhammad Ariff Ahmad and its original score was composed by Cikgu Abdolah Lamat. This year's new version was arranged by our *Duta Bahasa* Encik Megat Firdaus, who additionally also put together a dance tutorial video for the arrangement.
12. We invited the participation of schools, partners and friends to take part in the Cabaran Gerak Tari Bulan Bahasa, to learn and enjoy the dance steps for Bahasa Menjunjung Budaya and to share their own dance videos online on Facebook or Instagram. We saw many creative submissions come forward in the past two weeks. Some of these participants are also here today, and we look forward to more videos to come.
13. What you will see later today, will demonstrate the commitment of our fraternity of *Duta Bahasa* (language ambassadors) who have become a tight band of brothers and sisters. Thank you *Duta Bahasa* Cik Aidli Mosbit for putting together today's launch performance, and to all our Duta Bahasa for coming together as role models, to promote our Malay language and culture. These efforts will only complement the groundswell of efforts by all our community partners and MAECs, as we hope to inspire even more and especially the younger, talented generation to come forward to provide continuity to a language that is ours to own.
14. And on this note, on behalf of the Malay Language Council, Singapore, we also congratulate Cik Nurfarhana M Noor, Encik Bakti Khair and Encik Shahrizal



Salleh, who will also be appointed as *Duta Bahasa*, today. Welcome to the *Duta Bahasa* family!

15. Everyone in the audience today would have received a copy of the *Sekata* Journal which was just re-launched by the Malay Language Council, Singapore. The first edition of this journal was published in the 1980s, and this year's edition is published in conjunction with *Bulan Bahasa*, and it highlights yet another effort in the continuing the language and literary development in Singapore. My deepest thanks goes to all contributors of this year's edition of *Sekata* and our editors – Cikgu Suratman Markasan, Encik Mohd Raman Daud, Encik Jamal Ismail, Cik Noridah Kamari and Encik Juffri Supa'at. May the community, especially students, benefit from reading this rich body of written works.
16. I am also grateful to the *Anugerah Guru Arif Budiman* (AGAB) award-winning teachers who have come together to contribute content for the very attractive printed notebooks distributed in conjunction with *Bulan Bahasa* this year.
17. *Bulan Bahasa* has also been fortunate to receive the support of our community partners such as MESRA and the People's Association (PA). The number of MAECs involved in *Bulan Bahasa* has doubled this year and it is encouraging to see the various programmes that are organised for our community. I hope that this effort in reaching out to the community will continue, so that the Malay language and culture will be celebrated and appreciated.



18. We are also grateful for the support of all our other partners, without which, *Bulan Bahasa* would not be possible. Sincere appreciation goes to the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee (MLLPC), Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism (LKYFB) and the National Translation Committee (NTC) for their commitment and support to all our partners. My sincerest appreciation also goes to the Lee Foundation, the Shaw Foundation, the Cultural Matching Fund, MUIS, Toteboard, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, SBS Transit, and Second Chance for their continuous support towards *Bulan Bahasa* and our programmes.

19. I would also like to extend my gratitude to venue partners for *Bulan Bahasa* – the National Library Board (NLB), Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) and Wisma Geylang Serai (WGS) and more for providing the spaces for our programme partners to organise their language promotion events and activities.

20. We also have the other supporters such as the MDIS, Auric Pacific and Sunshine Bakeries, and Teevers, Hajah Maimunah, Rumah Makan Minang, F&N and King's Potong Ice-Cream who have supported our major *Bulan Bahasa* milestone events this year. On behalf of the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee and the Malay Language Council, Singapore, I would like to thank each and every one of our supporters, and we look forward to your continued partnership with us.

21. It is this very supportive ecosystem of partners and donors, educators, schools and community organisations, and community at large that has contributed to the



growth of *Bulan Bahasa* today, so my Committee and I can plan this extent of celebrations for our language. As of today, our calendar of activities features close to 94 programmes by 52 partners.

22. The preparation towards *Bulan Bahasa* 2018 is very much a concerted effort by the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee. My thanks go to all Committee Members, who has given much of their time and effort to make *Bulan Bahasa* celebrations more special this year. May I please invite all Committee Members to stand up so we can acknowledge your roles in making *Bulan Bahasa* possible.

23. We are also well supported by the National Heritage Board (NHB), secretariat to the Malay Language Council, Singapore and the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee. For all the planning and hard work that has gone in once again to make *Bulan Bahasa* 2018 possible, thank you.

24. Our gathering today here at Wisma Geylang Serai, an important social centre for our community, expresses our community's desire to preserve our Malay language, heritage and culture for our children. Our efforts must continue and this responsibility towards the next generations must be shared by all of us.

25. As *Bulan Bahasa* continues its focus on *Ilmu* (Knowledge), *Budaya* (Culture) and *Mesra* (Relationships) in its efforts to preserve the use of the Malay language, and the return to this precinct signifies the importance to maintain our community's cultural and kinship ties.



26. Let us always remember that *bahasa Melayu* remains a national language in multi-cultural Singapore. The continued use and appreciation of the language and culture is dependent on us.
27. There is still much un-tapped potential in our community, to elicit support for the Malay language. Going forward, the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee and I would like to explore opportunities for our existing partners, to promote the language beyond the *Bulan Bahasa* period.
28. At the same time and to expand the *Bulan Bahasa* reach in the coming years, we will also take special interest in seeking out new groups and language supporters, to invite them into the *Bulan Bahasa* fold. Our new collaboration with groups such as Main Tulis this year, bears a hopeful assurance of continuity for our language promotion efforts.
29. By our collective actions, our partners and especially our Duta Bahasa, we have demonstrated our commitment and pledge of support towards the Malay language. How about you?
30. May our Malay language and culture continue to flourish within Singapore's diverse heritage and social fabric and may our young continue to use *bahasa Melayu* and keep our language alive.





31. *Jika libur hari Selasa,*

*Mari daki bukit bendera;*

*Tiga dekad Bulan Bahasa,*

*Ayuh rai satu Negara.*

*Bahasa Kita. Gunakanlah.*

Thank you.