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SPEECH ORIGINALLY DELIVERED IN MALAY

SPEECH BY MS 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) 2017, ON SATURDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER, AT THE MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE.

Guest of Honour, Mr Masagos Zulkifli Bin Masagos Mohamad, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

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

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

Parliamentary Colleagues

Mdm Zuraidah Abdullah, Chairman, Malay Heritage Foundation,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen



INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome to the Launch Ceremony of *Bulan Bahasa* 2017, and thank you for taking the time to join us today at the Malay Heritage Centre. It feels like it was only yesterday when we were gathered at the National Museum of Singapore celebrating last year's *Bulan Bahasa*.
2. That was also the first year the Malay Language Council, Singapore entrusted me with the important responsibility of chairing the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee, and delivering this annual signature event that the Malay community has come to look forward to every year.

Much has changed for me, since.

PRESERVING LANGUAGE AS A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

3. In April this year, I became a mother. My son, Ayden, grows fast and strong as the days and months go by. Like many Singaporeans, my husband and I are working parents, and our work commitments are often heavy.
4. We are very fortunate however, to have a family and especially my mother, as our pillars of everyday support for my son. It really does take a village to raise a child.
5. As I chair the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee for a second time this year, this entry into parenthood has somehow given me a renewed sense of purpose and



understanding. My wish for Ayden would be for him to grow up healthy and be happy, to develop good character. For his development, his emotional well-being and character formation, there is no food better for the soul than our own Malay language and rich Malay culture.

6. My mother knew it then when she was bringing us up, and I understand it now as a new mother.
7. Our gathering for today's celebration 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.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PIONEER TEACHERS AND AGAB RECIPIENTS

8. The spirit of giving back has always stood out for the Malay community, and our fraternity of teachers and educators embody it well. Every year at *Bulan Bahasa*, in addition to the many partners and programmes we bring together, we produce notebooks and language resources for sharing and distribution.
9. This year, we are exceptionally grateful to have the wonderful support of retired teachers such as Cikgu Adam Fadila and Cikgu Ummul Kalthum; Anugerah Guru Arif Budiman award winners Cikgu Abdul Malek Ahmad and Cikgu Siti Zainab Zainal, and our very own member of the Malay Language



Council, Singapore, Cikgu Tajudin Jaffar, who have come together to contribute precious Malay language content to *Bulan Bahasa*, to benefit all Malay language students and the community at large.

LANGUAGE AMBASSADORS, RAKAN BAHASA AND THEIR ROLES

10. The sense of duty and spirit of giving back also resonates well with three new language ambassadors we will appoint today, all of whom understand education and the roles of educators very well. On behalf of all *Duta Bahasa*, we extend our warmest welcome to Cik Jumaini Ariff, Ustaz Muhammad Zahid Bin Mohd Zin and Encik Dzar Bin Ismail. Congratulations on your appointment today!

11. The fruits of our labour in developing the young can also be seen in the growing numbers of *Rakan Bahasa* we welcome to the fold each year. This year, a record number of 161 *Rakan Bahasa* were appointed from a total of 81 schools.

12. Our *Rakan Bahasa* do not journey alone and we must thank all the teachers who put in extra time and effort to provide these privileged students with such enriching opportunities.

13. I have met many *Rakan Bahasa* these couple of years and I am always delighted by their personal recounts of learning and achievements they have



enjoyed as a result of their appointments. I hope the *Rakan Bahasa* initiative will continue grow.

14. This year, all *Rakan Bahasa* have gone through language and cultural content, and presentation skills training provided by our *Duta Bahasa*, the good people at Newsmaker, BERITA Mediacorp and the museum docents from the Malay Heritage Centre. The students have prepared long and hard to present soapbox tours at the galleries today, so to all parents, teachers and students, thank you for your support and hard work.

BULAN BAHASA 2017 PROGRAMMES AND THANKING SUPPORTERS

15. The calendar for *Bulan Bahasa 2017* continues to richly feature more than 100 programmes by our partners, so everyone can continue to enjoy *Bahasa Melayu* (the Malay Language) as a beautiful and dynamic language.
16. We are grateful for the support of all our partners - the National Library Board, MESRA and the different Malay Activity Executive Committees (MAECs), TEATRO, National Book Development Council of Singapore, Perbayu NTU, HazWorkz and more, too many to name.
17. Thank you for stepping forward to present such interesting Malay language programmes for the community.



18. It gives me much privilege to also make special mention of the programmes that highlight the continuing language development efforts and literary achievements of Cultural Medallion winners, such as Encik Yusnor Ef, Encik Suratman Markasan and Encik Mohamed Latiff Mohamed. The successes and accomplishments of these elders in our community can only inspire the young.

19. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the Advisors of our heartland partners, namely Tampines, Nee Soon, Keat Hong for Chua Chu Kang, and Woodlands for Sembawang for supporting the *Bulan Bahasa* celebrations. Together with Bukit Batok East for Jurong, let us continue to reach out to celebrate the Malay language within our neighbourhood communities, so everyone can appreciate the beauty of our culture as we know it.

SPONSORS

20. *Bulan Bahasa* has been fortunate to receive the strong support of the Lee Foundation, the Shaw Foundation, the Cultural Matching Fund, MUIS, Toteboard, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, Comfort Delgro, and Second Chance.

21. The launch celebrations today are also made more festive by support from Agrobazaar, F&N Drinks and King's Potong Ice-Cream.



22. I would also like to record my appreciation for the MDIS, Sunshine bakeries, and Mamanda who have supported our major *Bulan Bahasa* milestone events this year. On behalf of the *Bulan Bahasa* Committee and the Malay Language Council Singapore, please accept our sincere appreciation and we look forward to your continued patronage.
23. I would also like to acknowledge the strong support given by the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee and the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism. Our successful collaboration has enabled us to put together a comprehensive menu of programmes for the community.

BULAN BAHASA COMMITTEE

24. We hope to continue our joint efforts in enriching the use, and developing the the Malay language in Singapore. *Bulan Bahasa* is also a result of the commitment demonstrated by an able Committee that has given much of their time and effort to make things possible. My thanks go to all members including Ms Julina Khusaini and Cikgu Farizan Amin, for their unwavering and unrelenting support.
25. May I please invite all Committee Members to stand up so we can acknowledge your roles in making *Bulan Bahasa* possible.



26. We are also well supported by the National Heritage Board, secretariat to the Malay Language Council, Singapore and the Bulan Bahasa. For all the planning and hard work that has gone in once again to make Bulan Bahasa 2017 possible, thank you.

MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE AS THE VENUE FOR LAUNCH

27. And last but in no way least, I would also like to thank the Malay Heritage Centre and the Malay Heritage Foundation, for sharing this magnificent space with us, and all our visitors to *Bulan Bahasa*, this year.

28. This is a hub with a rich historical past, as the Malay community's place of trades, commerce and philanthropy in Singapore. It was also a centre for publications, dealing with Malay literature and education, and would seem befittingly appropriate as our launch venue this year.

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

CLOSING



30. Let us always remember that *Bahasa Melayu* remains a national language in multi-cultural Singapore. May our Malay culture continue to flourish within the society's diverse heritage and social fabric and may our young continue to use *Bahasa Melayu* and keep our language alive.

Bahasa Kita. Gunakanlah.

Thank you.