

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA

Selected Issues



KHAIRIL AZMIN MOKHTAR

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Functions and Privileges of the Malaysian Parliament: An

Overview

Khairil Azmin Mokhtar

If one were to ask a Malaysian: where is Parliament?, almost every one without hesitation will say that the Malaysian Parliament is that majestic building overlooking the Tugu Negara at Jalan Duta Kuala Lumpur, which is, of course, not the wrong answer. However, if one were to ask: who are Members of Parliament? Most people would name some of the candidates who won the General Election. It is a correct but incomplete answer. Questions such as: 'What is the life of Parliament?' and 'How many Parliaments have there been since this country achieved Independence?' you would probably get a disarming smile, or a shrug of the shoulders.

A longer and 'complicated' question such as 'If we gained Independence in 1957 and the Federal Constitution came into force on the same date -31st August 1957- and at the same time -12.00 midnight- why does Malaysia celebrate Parliament's 25th birthday two years after the nation celebrated its 25th anniversary of Independence?', would most probably make the person scratch his head, cause lines on the forehead or respond with an embarrassed: 'Are you sure?'. This chapter intends to deliberate on certain aspects of Parliament that most people should know. Emphasis is made on its functions and privileges.

What is Parliament?

Parliament is an English word which originates from the old French *parley*. It means 'speaking' or 'talking.' According to the Oxford