CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA
SELECTED ISSUES

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IIUM Press
Published by:
IIUM Press
International Islamic University Malaysia

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Khairil Azmin
Constitutional Law and Human Rights in Malaysia: Selected Issues
Khairil Azmin

ISBN: 978-967-0225-75-3

Member of Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia – MAPIM
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

Printed by:
IIUM PRINTING SDN. BHD.
No. 1, Jalan Industri Batu Caves 1/3
Taman Perindustrian Batu Caves
Batu Caves Centre Point
68100 Batu Caves
Selangor Darul Ehsan
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Functions and Privileges of the Malaysian Parliament: An Overview

Khairil Azmin Mokhtar

If one were to ask a Malaysian: where is Parliament?, almost everyone 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