

**M'sia first quarter growth 5.3 percent**  
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Malaysia's economy grew at a better-than-expected 5.3 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, boosted by services and a recovering construction sector, the central Bank Negara said today.

Services remained the main driver of growth, expanding 9.6 percent compared with the same quarter last year, supported by consumption demand, finance and business services, central bank governor Zeti Akhtar Aziz told a news conference.

Manufacturing expanded by 1.7 percent amid a global downturn in the electronics and electrical sector, she said.

The 4.0 percent growth in construction marked the second consecutive quarterly expansion after almost three years of contraction, Zeti said.

Agriculture grew by 2.0 percent but mining declined 1.1 percent on lower crude oil production, Zeti added.

She maintained the government's full-year target for gross domestic product growth at 6.0 percent.

"Growth will be stronger in the second half of the year," Zeti said.

Malaysia's economy last year saw 5.9 percent growth in GDP, the value of all goods and services produced in the country.

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