

New MPs take oath in Parliament
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Newly elected lawmakers took oath of office in parliament today after March 8 general elections which changed the political landscape.
MCPX

The election saw unprecedented gains by a resurgent opposition, led by former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, who formed an alliance to challenge Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Barisan Nasional coalition.

parliament 2008 first day 280408 14Abdullah's coalition has ruled Malaysia for more than half a century since the former colony gained independence from Britain but its showing in March was the worst in Barisan Nasional's history.

The Pakatan Rakyat opposition alliance claimed more than a third of parliamentary seats and five states in the polls, putting Abdullah under heavy pressure with calls from within his party to quit.

Abdullah was the first one to be sworn in parliament, followed by his deputy Najib Razak and other cabinet ministers.

"I, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, being chosen as a member of parliament, vow to honestly fulfil my obligations with all my strength.

"I pledge my true loyalty to Malaysia and vow to preserve, protect and defend the constitution," Abdullah, who wore a black and gold traditional Malay outfit, said.

King Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin will officially open the first session of the 222-member Parliament on Tuesday.

Below is what returning MPs as well as new faces had to say:

Ong Ka Ting (BN-Kulai), former housing and local government minister

I feel very different today because I am no longer a member of the administration. I am a free man and I will have more freedom to give my view which will reflect the people's view. I will speak up as a backbencher not only for the Chinese community but Malaysians. I will not hesitate to give constructive criticism on matters concerning the government.

umno selangor meeting 170408 rafidahRafidah Aziz (BN-Kuala Kangsar), former international trade and industry minister

I'm fine, very fine. (Any difference for you as a backbencher now?) Not really, I was a backbencher in the Senate way back in 1974.

(Would you be an effective backbencher?) Let me put it this way - we will monitor as it goes.

Nasharuddin Mat Isa (PAS-Bachok), second-time MP after a four-year hiatus

It's a new hall and a new gallery at Parliament (laughs). Other than that, I feel good and quite confident that the opposition's voice will be heard this time in Parliament with the numbers that we have.

Liew Chin Tong (DAP-Bukit Bendera), first-time MP

I'm using another identity to be in Parliament today as I was previously assistant to Seputeh MP Teresa Kok, as well as assistant to then Parliamentary Opposition Leader (Lim Kit Siang). It's a different feeling today but of course the duty is heavier for me now. We need a systematic change in Parliament (such as) more time to be allocated for the debate, more select committees to be set up in order for the MPs to study a bill thoroughly before they are passed in the House.

parliament 2008 first day 280408 11Loh Gwo Burne (PKR-Kelana Jaya), first-time MP of the 'Lingam tape fame' who showed up in Parliament today with his Sony camera and Indonesian Chinese girlfriend

I have to suppress my urge to speak up in the House just now when Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) questioned the MP who did not raise his hand when swearing in. Why can't they just raise their hand properly? I have an agreement with Wee Choo Keong (PKR-Wangsa Maju) to bring our respective camera today, he was supposed to take my picture and I will take his but Wee did not bring his camera.

parliament 2008 first day 280408 jayakumarDr D Jeyakumar (PKR-Sungai Siput), first-time MP and spotted with an 'anti-ISA' badge on his dark jacket

It was a boring session with over 200 fellows repeating the same thing at the swearing-in (laughs). To call for the abolishment of the Internal Security Act (ISA), which is long overdue, will be one of the main priority for me and we need to look at the possibility of a recession (in our economy) too in this Parliament session.

Hishammuddin Hussein (BN-Sembrong), Education Minister

Today's session was quite organised, very proper, well-arranged, and I hope it continues as it happened today... properly and that whatever views are aired are constructive.

(On the large number of opposition MPs) This is nothing special. Whether it's one, or ten or 80 (opposition) voices, if their views are constructive, we will always listen to them. Nobody can deny them (their voice), and we will accept openly. The most important thing is that the debates can bring us toward building a country and people that can stand along with the other countries in this country.

Tian Chua (PKR-Batu), first-time MP

bersih protest constitution amendment 071207 tian chua(How did you feel? You sat in Parliament House earlier this morning as an MP, whereas four months ago, you had to be carried out of your car to prevent you from entering this building)

We see (this as showing) the ability of our political system to accept activists and advocates... This shows the maturity of our society... We have to accept that the right to

peaceful assembly is part of our struggle. In the future, the government and people must have a more open attitude and be more accepting of different voices and to activists who are brave enough to air issues that previously were not given much weight.

Syed Hamid Albar (Kota Tinggi-BN), former foreign affairs minister, currently the Minister of Home Affairs

(On the large number of opposition MPs) I don't think it makes any difference. As far as we are concerned... we represent the rakyat, we have got the mandate to govern, and we will govern. We will respond to questions. I don't there should be any difference... I think both sides have roles to play. It is important that the rakyat are served in the best interests of parliamentary democracy, and I think the opposition with the greater seats that they have, they may want to express more, they may want to criticise more. For the moment, I think it is our duty to respond accordingly.

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