

IDEAS 12th Anniversary Theme: Moving Forward Together

Keynote Address Theme: Economic and Political Issues in Malaysia

Speaker: Tan Sri Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz, Former Minister, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Malaysia

Introduction (Salutations + Honorable Guests)

- To be added once VIP list is confirmed

Body 1

*List of current political issues

- Firstly, consider the theme of “moving forward”: which connotes progress
- Yet still, there are so many Malaysian policies that are regressive, as opposed to progressive
- Political apathy and distrust in youth
- No form of political funding laws and regulation
- Structural patronage and political incumbency
- Court recently ruled no citizenship for overseas-born children of Malaysian women

Body 2

*Elaboration - How can we address these issues in a way that brings us hope/impact

- How does the work we conduct at IDEAS move — and in fact, propel — Malaysia forward?
- Evidence-based research to address underlying issues
- One of the few silver linings of the pandemic has been how it has created so many opportunities for change across a slew of sectors
 - E.g. it has restyled the political economy by kickstarting Malaysia's move to a more digital economy

Body 3

*List of current economic issues

- Price hikes and food inflation
- Economic decisions absent from policies or policy study
- Lower than expected mobility of people and goods despite easing of restrictions post-lockdown

- War in Ukraine and the de-coupling of Russia that has caused a slow-down in the global economy, including Malaysia's
- Unintended outcomes from economic policies
 - E.g. the chicken export ban led to an over-supply of chicken in the domestic market, and the loss of an export market to Singapore
- Lack of social safety net in Malaysia — Covid-19 serves as a reminder to us that huge economic shocks can have an unproportionate impact on different groups of people in society
 - E.g. period poverty among women, lack of food among households in poverty, and loss of education among children — protective and preventive measures are needed to secure all Malaysians from future misfortunes

Body 4

*Elaboration - How can we address these issues in a way that brings us hope/impact

- How Malaysia should move forward in terms of regional cooperation and trade, as Malaysia is still an open economy that relies on international trade — think through policies before putting them in place
- Establish a social safety net
- Take immediate, meaningful actions towards recurring issues like inflation and traffic congestion
- Learn from the pandemic and set up contingency plans
 - E.g. address the issues faced by vulnerable groups and have targeted assistance instead of a blanket approach

Concluding Remarks