

# **A leadership transition in the 21st PSM congress**

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**The 21st national congress of the Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM) took place from the 12th to the 14th of July 2019 in Kajang, Selangor. This congress featured the culmination of a leadership transition process that started five years ago.**

The original office-holders of top party leadership positions from PSM's founding in 1998 have now all been replaced. This year, D<sup>r</sup>. Nasir Hashim stepped down as Chairman, making way for D<sup>r</sup>. Jeyakumar Devaraj, former Member of Parliament for Sungai Siput. At the same time, former General Secretary S. Arulchelvan has been elected as Vice-Chairman, replacing M. Sarasvathy. PSM Secretary-General A. Sivarajan and Treasurer Soh Sook Hwa remain in their respective posts, which they have occupied since 2015.

This year's party elections also featured the selection of several new faces to the PSM central committee, including social activist Chong Yee Shan, lawyer-activist Kohila, youth activist Sharan Raj and Teh Yee Cheu, the former Penang state assemblyperson for Tanjung Bungah.

The central committee will serve a two-year term. A majority (8 members) of the 15-member committee consists of women. These women hold important positions such as Vice Secretary-General, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer.

## **Climate Change Policy**

Given the increased importance of environmental issues resulting from unsustainable development in Malaysia, PSM has for the first time put forward and passed a policy paper entitled "Handling Climate Change : A Green Alternative for Malaysia". This policy paper was accepted by the Congress delegation as a foundation for PSM's approach to deal with the climate crisis. In keeping with the spirit of this policy paper, PSM Congress delegates also passed a resolution to launch a national campaign to urge the Pakatan Harapan government to declare a "Climate Emergency" so the necessary drastic actions to counter global warming can move forward.

## **Building a New Political Alliance**

In keeping with the theme, "A Progressive Struggle in New Malaysia", this congress featured for the first time the participation of representatives from Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia as observers in the opening of the Congress. Gerakan, which left the Barisan Nasional coalition, now acts independently and is interested in collaborating with other progressive movements. PSM hopes that their participation in this congress as observers will lead to opportunities for further discussion.

PSM is working toward forming a new political alliance to face the 15th General Election, which is why the opening of the congress was attended by observers from outside parties. Hopefully, their presence will open doors to healthy cooperation.

## **Formation of State Offices**

This congress also resolved to start PSM State Liason Offices in every state. PSM State Liason Offices will scrutinize governmental policies and advocate for victims of unfair practices, whether by Pakatan Harapan or Barisan Nasional governments. The congress also aims for PSM to grow and fill the void in today's politics, as Malaysia needs a credible and trustworthy opposition party.

## **Overcoming the Rise of the Right-wing Populism**

A special session was held during the Congress to study the phenomenon of the rise of the right-wing populism both internationally and in Malaysia. Discussion papers were put forward by PSM Central Committee member Choo Chon Kai and special guest Hj Zaid Kamaruddin from IKRAM. This year's 21st PSM Congress in Kajang was an important historical moment in PSM's struggle- a struggle that always progresses dynamically, launches new campaigns, tackles new issues, forms new partnerships, so we may become a country that is fair, just, and progressive.

### **A. Sivarajan**

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