

# Malaysia: Response to concerns about a PSM-Pakatan Harapan electoral pact

Wednesday 5 October 2022, by [ARUTCHELVAN S.](#) (Date first published: 28 September 2022).

**Firstly let me respond to the article “[PSM owes supporters explanation for seeking to join PH](#)” which appeared in Free Malaysia Today on 27-9-2022. I will like to thank Sdr Dr Kua Kia Soong for posting these questions as it will give us the avenue to respond to these questions.**

To start with, PSM did not seek to join PH as indicated in the title of Dr Kua’s article. PSM merely asked for an electoral collaboration and this is very well illustrated in PH’s statement on 21-9-2022. According to this statement MUDA has requested the join the coalition whereas PSM is seeking to work together during the election.

In the last week, PSM has been getting many positive vibes from supporters on this and negotiations are taking place. It would be premature to judge on the outcome as the process is still ongoing.

After PSM’s bad showing in the last GE14 where the party lost in all the seats it contested as well as its deposits, there were two things glaring in our analysis. First, no single party can win an election unless they join a coalition. Second, unless a party stands in 222 seats or a significantly large number of seats, voters are not going to sacrifice their votes to a party which will be unable to form a government. The “big picture” is always in people’s mind when they decide who to vote and small parties do poorly in an electoral system using “first past the post”. This is the case all over the world and that is why PSM has always advocated a proportional election system and local government elections.

Post Sheraton Move in early 2020, PSM did its own consultation meeting with many civil society organisations, left learning activist friends and progressive organisations where we asked people for their opinions on GE 15 and on what PSM should be doing. Meetings with various organisations were held in Klang Valley, Penang and Perak. These meetings were held between July 2020 up till 2021. A total of 34 organisations and as many as 80 activists and community leaders took part in these discussions where we asked what people thought about the collapse of PH as well how they foresee GE 15 and PSM’s role.

The key outcome of these discussions was that PSM must work within a coalition framework and agree to a common logo and try to get a few members elected into the legislature. Though there were many talks about a third force, it appeared that currently that the progressive forces were not prepared and don’t have the numbers to put forward a third force in all the seats in the coming GE 15.

PSM then held its own special congress to discuss elections on 13 February 2022, where it was decided by our members that PSM must work within a coalition framework and try not to go in solo. The meeting mandated us to seek an electoral collaboration with the following potential coalition partners: PH, MUDA and Warisan. The same meeting also decided that PSM should not collaborate

with BN and PN at any cost. Choosing PH over BN and PN is quite apparent. The meeting also agreed for PSM to stand using a common logo and that the Central Committee is given the mandate to negotiate with the parties stated above. Prior to that, PSM had also held consultation discussions with Gerak Independent, PRM and MAP.

Most Malaysians and an overwhelming number of our supporters are very excited that finally there are some discussions taking place between PH and PSM. Many of them have urged us as well as PH that we should work together to defeat the common enemy in the spirit of a united front.

PSM is also no novice when it comes to negotiation with opposition parties in the past. We have been doing it since 1999 even when the party was yet to be registered. We have always stood our ground and stayed principled all these years. In the last election, when many people jumped into the band wagon and supported Dr Mahathir, we did not do so.

We have been always building power in the grassroots as well as empowering the working masses. We have also taken into account many of the issues raised by Dr Kua like appealing to the middle classes and have adopted issues and campaigns such as on the climate emergency, taxation policies, public health care, affordable housing, youth unemployment, et cetera. Many people recognise PSM as a tireless advocate for the most marginalised and the B40. We consider these struggles as pertinent in building an equitable society.

We have been consistently fighting based on class lines and not communal lines. Our politics are progressive and forward looking on many issues such as on gender and racial harmony. Our position on neoliberal capitalism and taxation policies are consistent and we have never wavered on this even during the years we were working with Pakatan Rakyat. Because of these qualities, PSM views are always taken seriously by the media as we give an alternative view to the current state of affairs.

We have also a pool of young as well as seasoned activists who are ready to offer themselves as candidates. These activists have vast experience in working with the people and have not been tainted with corruption cases. In the current electoral system, race based political structures have made it difficult for progressive forces to survive. Playing to the gallery is not one of our strong points as what is much practiced by many to win votes in Malaysia. Yet it is our destiny to fight for a more equitable and just world. Struggle we shall, win we may.

When working in a coalition, there must be an agreement to a minimum program. I am sure when Dr. Kua Kia Soong from the Chinese educationist movement joined the DAP in the early 1990s, it was also based on some common objectives and the objective situation of the politics then.

PSM is always working on building a progressive force with like-minded people in civil society as well as from the existing political parties. We are not hasty in building a progressive force. Neither are we utopianist. The conditions must be ripe for such a movement.

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**S. Arutchelvan** Deputy Chairperson, Parti Sosialis Malaysia

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**P.S.**

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