

10 things you might not have known about PSM

Lately there has been much talk about the PSM. Some people asked if PSM is a new party. Some say PSM is a fringe party and does not have a National perspective for the country, and the party only does some grassroots work among some communities. Some claim PSM is such an insignificant party and ridicule us as a Mosquito party. Below we have listed 10 things which you may not know about the PSM.

1. Did you know it took PSM ten years to be registered as a political party? Why? Because PSM was a party of activists from three Community Organisations - SWP, CDC and Alaigal who had a history of fighting many issues of the common person that inevitably involved confronting the state. The Home Minister called PSM a threat to National Security, citing that as the reason for rejecting its registration. The PSM then became the first party in Malaysian history to take the government to court for violating our right to Freedom of Association.
2. Did you know that the PSM was the first party to protest against the GST? The first protest was held in 2004, four years before the PSM was given official recognition. In 2015 again, the PSM put up a strong fight to stop the GST with more than a hundred activists occupying the Customs Department on 23 March 2015. This bold and radical protest resulted in over a hundred arrests, with 79 people later being charged in court. Out of this 79, PSM members totalled 44.
3. Did you know the party with the highest success rate unchallenged by any other political party in resolving housing issues of the plantation workers is the PSM? The PSM's struggles for the housing rights of plantation workers have resulted in many plantation workers getting free houses or free housing lots. Most importantly today there is a policy at the national level protecting plantation workers from eviction until their housing issue is resolved. This is a major victory for the plantation community.
4. Did you know that the PSM played a major role in making the Minimum Wage Act a reality? From 2012, it became mandatory for all workers in Malaysia to be paid no less than the minimum wage of RM 900, and in 2016, this was increased to RM 1000 for Peninsular Malaysia and RM 920 for Sabah and Sarawak. Many do not know that the most prominent political party fighting for the Minimum Wage Act besides the MTUC was the PSM. The PSM launched a minimum wage campaign way back in 2003 with JERIT; one of the highlights was the handing over of 50,000 postcards in Parliament to then Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi on 21/9/06, demanding the enactment of a minimum wage law. The PSM campaigned tirelessly through many forums, big demonstrations, nationwide pickets and roadshows until the Minimum Wage Act was passed. Not only that, the PSM was the only political party fighting hard for a workers' retrenchment fund and we are proud that the Workers Insurance Scheme was implemented at the start of this year.

5. Did you know that the PSM holds the record for being the party that has most consistently fought to preserve and enhance public healthcare? On 23 December 2004, PSM mobilised 81 organisations and hundreds of people to protest against the privatisation of government hospital dispensaries. Earlier, on 4 December that year, then Health Minister Dr Chua Soi Lek had announced that the government was going to privatise government hospital dispensaries from 2005 but this move was put on hold after the huge protest by the PSM. Besides that, the PSM put together a coalition called Coalition Against Health Care Privatisation and among its campaigns were the protest actions against private wings in government hospitals and against the full-paying patients' scheme. The PSM also became the first party to take the government to court when they wanted to increase the medical fees for migrant workers by 300% as the move would negatively affect the healthcare situation of the entire nation. The PSM continues to oppose the privatization of healthcare including health tourism that turns health into a business.

6. Did you know that on 3 November 2012, PSM was the first opposition political party to organise a National Forum on Public Transport In Malaysia through the Working Group on Public Transportation in Malaysia, a group coordinated by PSM, and that included CETDEM, Transit, Damai Association, KLSelangor Chinese Assembly Hall, PPBM and SABM. In 2015, a memorandum was also sent to SPAD with a proposal for improving public transportation in Malaysia.

7. Did you know on the question of labour migration, it was the PSM which took the lead and ventured into this issue when most other political parties just complained about the situation without doing much? From 4 August 2016, the Migrant Workers' Right to Redress Coalition – a coalition initiated by the PSM - organised four roundtable discussions with critical stakeholders, and hosted by the Development Studies Department of the University of Malaya's Faculty of Economics and Administration. The initiative brought together representatives of the government, employers and workers, embassy officials of sending countries, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), and civil society organisations. The most significant recommendation was that the profit motive should be removed from the recruitment and management of migrant labour. Recruitment should be determined by the actual manpower needs of the country; it should complement the local labour force, and other existing sources of labour including refugees and undocumented workers. This report remains today the most comprehensive document to properly address migrant worker issues in Malaysia.

8. PSM is perhaps the only party which has a policy and blueprint on International trade. PSM, working with many other organisations, successfully opposed the FTA with the US. PSM recently initiated the People's Charter on International Trade Agreements and is committed to fighting all trade agreements that it considers unfair and only favouring big corporations, including the new regional economic partnership that is set

to replace the US-sponsored Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA). Most political parties only look at FDI but PSM looks at the human angle.

9. Did you know, PSM's sole member of Parliament Dr Jeyakumar holds the record of declaring assets nine years in a row and perhaps is the sole MP who has raised and proposed the most number of private member's bills on various issues - land, food security, conversions, the Industrial Relations Act a social inclusion act, etc. He also put forward an emergency motion on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. Also, in 2008, PSM's local Government councillors were the only ones in the country to declare assets.

10. PSM is seen as the champion of housing rights. The party Chairperson Dr. Nasir Hashim was the first person to use the term Peneroka Bandar – urban pioneers - to fight the term squatters that was being used by the state and developers to justify the forced eviction of poor settlers on land they had added value to. PSM has successfully fought and saved many homes of the poor and helped them get secure alternative housing. PSM has also formed a coalition on housing rights and affordable housing. Today when there is an eviction – let it be urban poor, orang asli, farmers, small businesses, it is the PSM which people look for.

Bonus

Besides PSM was the first political party in Malaysia to oppose the use of nuclear power as an alternate source of energy. We have a coalition and proposal to improve low-cost flats in the country. An analysis on SME and proposals how to resolve people facing auctions.