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With a New Preface and Postscript by the Author

NIK NAZMI NIK AHMAD

“In search of answers to the questions concerning Malays and Malayness, this young writer breaks free from the stereotypical mindsets that have plagued the discourse. This is the voice of conscience of a young Malay progressive.”

– Anwar Ibrahim

The post-2018 order is an exciting time of possibilities for Malaysia. For the country's Malay community to face new challenges of the 21st century and thrive, it has to look forward and forge ahead in a progressive manner. In this updated edition of *Moving Forward*, Nik Nazmi pushes for a paradigm that is comfortable with diversity and democracy. With the world changing and new problems to confront, Malaysia is brought to a crossroads. The choice is clear: a limbo of mediocrity with eventual decline looming, or to move forward educationally, economically, politically and socially.

This edition of *Moving Forward* includes a new preface and postscript to reflect on what Malaysians have achieved and cast an eye on the challenges that lie ahead.

“Nik Nazmi represents a refreshing brand of Malay politics: middle-of-the-road, confident, unafraid and bold.”

– Karim Raslan, CEO of the KRA Group

“Nik Nazmi is a refreshing voice. He has some profound observations and perspectives that belie his age and political youth.”

– M. Bakri Musa, author of *The Malay Dilemma Revisited*

Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad read law at King's College London before becoming private secretary to Anwar Ibrahim. In the 2008 general election, he was the youngest elected representative when he won the Seri Setia state seat in Selangor. He is Member of Parliament for Setiawangsa, elected Member of the KEADILAN Central Leadership Council and Chief Organising Secretary of the party.

NIK NAZMI NIK AHMAD

MOVING FORWARD

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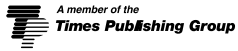
MOVING FORWARD

MALAYS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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To my parents

For Review only

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMCJA	All Malaya Council for Joint Action
AP	Approved Permit
BCIC	Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community
BTN	Biro Tata Negara (National Civics Bureau)
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EPU	Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement Party)
GLC	Government-Linked Company
HICOM	Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia Berhad
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
Keadilan	Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party)
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat (People's Trust Council)
MCKK	The Malay College Kuala Kangsar
MBPJ	Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya (Petaling Jaya City Council)
NEP	New Economic Policy
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan Malaysian Islamic Party)
PNB	Permodalan Nasional Berhad (National Equity Corporation)
PR	Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact/People's Alliance); made up of Keadilan, DAP and PAS
PSD	Public Services Department
PUTERA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (People's Action Centre)
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
STPM	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education)
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Assessment Test)

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PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

Many people were surprised when *Moving Forward: Malays for the 21st Century* was published a decade ago. At the time, I was (and still am) pushing for a more progressive paradigm where Malaysians would be at ease with their country's diversity. This led some to question me: Why then did I write a book addressing the Malays specifically? Wasn't this a contradiction in terms?

As *Moving Forward* argues, the state of mind of the Malays is crucial if any change in Malaysia is to be sustainable. Malays are by sheer number the biggest community in the country; we are also the fastest growing. Constitutionally, historically and culturally, we occupy a special position in Malaysia.

I believe that the community's own future is best assured with progressive politics, and that the fate of such progressive politics in Malaysia is in the hands of the Malays.

I wrote these things because UMNO was increasingly playing the race and religion card following the loss of Barisan Nasional's two-thirds majority in 2008. I was the youngest legislator to be elected that year. I was also appointed Political Secretary to the first non-UMNO Menteri Besar of Selangor and experienced first-hand the challenges in convincing the Malays that a different kind of future was possible.

Ten years later at the 2018 General Election, Barisan Nasional lost power for the first time in Malaysia's history. This time, I won as an

MP and led the new Pakatan Harapan coalition's Youth Wing as well as the KEADILAN Youth. I journeyed to Malay villages in Terengganu and deep in the heart of Perak, to low-cost flats in the Klang Valley and Johor Bahru, to Dayak longhouses in Sarawak and Bumiputera communities in the interior of Sabah.

Pakatan Harapan and our ally in Sabah, WARISAN, won a majority of the Parliamentary seats. But unlike in 2013, when the PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) was in Pakatan Rakyat and we obtained a majority in the popular vote, this time the three-way contests across the country led to a lower share for Pakatan Harapan.

PAS was almost entirely wiped out on the west coast, but on the east coast, it retained Kelantan and took back Terengganu after 14 years. Pakatan Harapan was impressive on the west coast—but only from Selangor southwards. UMNO and pockets of PAS remained strong in Perak, Kedah, Perlis and even mainland Penang.

WARISAN and Pakatan Harapan did well among the Muslim Bumiputeras in the east coast of Sabah, but predictably, Pakatan Harapan failed to make inroads among the Muslim Bumiputeras in Sarawak. This seems ironic, since Sarawakians, like Sabahans, have always been comfortable with social diversity—a trait commonly associated with Pakatan Harapan. At the same time, many Dayak constituencies voted for Pakatan Harapan and independent candidates.

Older, hopefully wiser and definitely more overweight, I have reflected on these experiences as the Pakatan Harapan federal government announced its first cabinet, introduced its first budget and sought to implement policies that stayed true to its manifesto.

On WhatsApp groups and my Facebook page as well as mamak shops, the Malay community across all segments became more worried. The issues of LGBT rights and child marriage exposed the deep divide in Malaysian society. This came to a head when the government spoke of ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)—a convention ratified by all

Muslim majority countries except for Malaysia and Brunei—resulting in a massive rally combining PAS, UMNO and right-wing NGOs.

In light of these events, *Moving Forward* is just as relevant today as it was in 2009. While the content remains largely the same as it was when first published, this edition includes an updated conclusion to reflect on the book's ideas in light of the progress we have achieved and the new challenges we face today.

Kuala Lumpur
2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a culmination of a long process that involved both intellectual reflection and a practical participation in politics. I strongly believe there is value in balancing the two. As one of the greatest Muslim scholars, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali once said, “Knowledge without action is madness while action without knowledge is pointless.” It is my sincere hope that my writing demonstrates my knowledge put into action and vice-versa.

Writing *Moving Forward* became a source of therapy as I became more exposed to the rough-and-tumble world of politics. It provided me with the time and space to reflect, indeed to remind myself of the ideals that got me involved in public service in the first place.

Many people have contributed in various ways to make this book a reality and it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge them here.

I am forever grateful to Allahyarham Adlan Benan Omar, the most brilliant Malaysian of his generation, not only for getting me into politics but for encouraging me to write and provoking me to always think critically. Khalid Jaafar also played an important role by giving me a column in what was then known as *Berita Keadilan* that allowed me to formulate many thoughts, which have now culminated in this book.

Both Steven Gan of *Malaysiakini* and Ho Kay Tat who was Chief Editor of *The Sun* and *The Edge* newspapers gave me the space to

develop my writing and argue many of the basic positions that underlie the general theme of this book. I must also thank Leslie Lau of *The Malaysian Insider* for inviting me to be a columnist on that website.

Parts of *Moving Forward* include portions from some previously published essays. These include 'Saying Yes to Non-Racial Affirmative Action' which was originally published in *Malaysiakini*; 'Where Are the Young Malays?' in *The Edge*; 'The Family, the State and Globalisation' in *Asia Times Online* and a jointly-written essay with Nurul Izzah Anwar, 'Working for Malaysia's Future' in *The Malaysian Insider*.

Karim Raslan deserves a special mention for persuading me to keep on writing no matter how tied down I got with politics, and for suggesting that I write something on the Malays.

I must also record my appreciation to Christine Chong of Marshall Cavendish Malaysia for so quickly and enthusiastically agreeing to publish my work.

I would like to thank my friends, Tunku 'Abidin Muhriz and Hafiz Noor Shams for listening to my thoughts when I initially had the idea for writing *Moving Forward*. Having shared so many projects that did not take off, I have to give them credit for continuing to provide me with the inputs that led to the birth of this book.

After I finished the initial draft, Tunku 'Abidin and Hafiz along with Lynn Kuok, Ng Boon Ka, Najwan Halimi, Imran Karim, Imran Idris, Saifullah Zulkifli and Hizami Iskandar took time off from their busy schedules to read through and comment on the draft. Keith Leong was especially pivotal in restructuring the book to make it more coherent while playing the role of an intellectual sparring partner. Fahda Nur Ahmad Kamar also provided me with crucial advice at the final stage of the book. I am privileged to know this excellent group of young Malaysians who exemplify the best that Malaysia has to offer.

Mawarni Hassan's experience in education has been a useful source of reference for my elaborations on the subject in *Moving Forward*. More importantly however, is the fact that Mawarni and her family

have sacrificed so much to make the Mentari Project a success. This was a product of not only our extensive brainstorming, but also their constant plodding, week in and week out, even after I was elected as assemblyman for Seri Setia and could not devote as much attention to the project as I did before.

I have been blessed with the privilege of serving Malaysia under two towering personalities, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Tan Sri Dato' Abdul Khalid Ibrahim. Datuk Seri Anwar taught me never to forget my intellectual and spiritual roots. He is also a constant reminder of the importance of not losing faith in our ideals even while bogged down in the muck and grime of politics.

Tan Sri Khalid contributed to my vision for Malaysia's future and gave me the latitude to write even as I juggled so many responsibilities as his Political Secretary. He has also taught me the invaluable lesson of seeing public life as a service of, for and by the people. In addition, long-time trade unionist, Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud, my Parti Keadilan Rakyat Division Chief has taught me never to give up on the struggle and provided the space for me to learn and develop.

My father, who spurred my interest in reading particularly on the subjects of religion, history, politics and economics from a very young age, also showed me the need to be passionate in what I believe in. Our different generational perspectives on Malay issues are a useful case study on how the Malay society has evolved from the 20th to the 21st century. Both my parents have vigorously supported me all my life, even when I chose the path less taken and to them, I owe that inextinguishable debt children bear to their parents.

The unwavering support of my wife, Imaan, not only for this project but for all my other endeavours has been a great source of strength. She too, was willing to lend an ear to my ideas and read through my drafts, making them more accessible with her suggestions. *Moving Forward* is a better book because of her. She has had to patiently put up with a husband who was not only busy with politics but with writing a book,

all the while grappling with her own medical career.

There are others who have contributed to *Moving Forward* in various ways who I am regrettably unable to name. Without their help, this book would never have been written. Their names, where mentioned in this book have been changed to protect them.

Needless to say, any errors or mistakes are entirely my own.

INTRODUCTION

This book is about a young man's hopes and dreams for the Malay community. It is about his hope that they can rise from the stagnation that they have found themselves in today. It tells of his dream that they can, one day, embrace and be embraced by a larger Malaysian national ethos even as their Malay identity grows from strength to strength.

I am aware that this topic has been done to death, but that in no way excuses me from my duty to speak up for my people and my country. The same goes for all Malaysians when the situation calls for it—something that is becoming increasingly the case of late. Until and unless Malays and all Malaysians are willing to truly speak their mind, then our country will remain condemned to mediocrity. It is to the former that this book is addressed, but I hope that what I have written here is also something the latter can take cognisance of and dare I say, draw inspiration from.

It is increasingly obvious that the Malaysian Malays of the 21st century are at a crossroads. The Malay archipelago has traditionally always been part of the international trading network and hence, the fortunes of the community are inevitably tied to changes at the global stage. As the scenario for the world, including Malaysia, evolves rapidly, Malaysians must grapple with a very different set of challenges as well.

In many ways, when the country achieved Merdeka (Independence), Malaysia was an improbable nation marked by innumerable paradoxes.

A fractured society divided by race, religion and economic class, yet blessed with abundant resources and rich cultures, it undertook a unique constitutional consensus that was agreed upon by the different communities to enable the country to gain independence.

Within a decade, however, the unresolved problems related to our colonial experience reared their ugly heads and the consensus came under threat. In response, a new compromise—embodied by the NEP—was forged with the spirit of consensus that led us to freedom.

Yet, this compromise has now become a sacred cow of sorts, one that must not be questioned by anyone. Even as the society has evolved and new challenges have emerged, the government has decided to maintain the status quo at all costs—even when fresh solutions are needed—all in the name of Malay interests.

Worse still, race continues to be used as a divisive tool in politics to perpetuate a sense of fear and foreboding among ordinary Malaysians while the world moves on. Culture wars that are half a century old continue to be waged, while the battles that we need to fight to ensure that the Malays and Malaysia move forward continue to be ignored.

But the 12th Malaysian General Elections on 8 March, 2008 brought about a new opening. It brought to the fore a new generation of Malays that can hope for a different Malaysia and break the politics of fear.

The results of the 12th General Elections can be interpreted in many ways, but certainly it proved that the Malays could support moving away from the race-based system if communicated in the right way (although admittedly, other factors such as the weak BN leadership, a united Opposition, the rise of new media and spiralling prices, had also contributed to this positive outcome).

I have written many articles on various Malay issues and have thought long and hard about articulating an overall outlook on how Malays can move forward. A few friends who became aware of this then asked me to put these thoughts down in a book.

I hesitated at first, since I did not know how useful my contribution would be to this controversial and complex subject. In addition, I cannot deny that I have also been a beneficiary of the NEP: I was educated at an elite all-Malay institution, the MCKK and received a GLC scholarship reserved for Bumiputeras. But my friends persuaded me to complete this book since they felt that it would offer a useful perspective on the issue.

Yes, I have benefited from the NEP and acknowledge as much throughout the book. I accept the policy's positive contributions. However, I believe that it is to the credit of the NEP that the Malays who have been empowered by the policy now realise that we need to come up with alternatives if the Malays are to face the challenges of the 21st century. The most compelling reason to do away with the NEP now is that it has worked for a great many Malays, but another model is now needed to help the Malays that have not benefited as well as their non-Malay compatriots in need.

I believe it is crucial to examine the questions raised in this book, and for these questions to be evaluated on their merits. I have tried to straddle my writing between a purely academic exercise and a polemical treatise, preferring to keep references to a minimum while at the same time trying to support my arguments with facts.

In my conversations with Malays from all walks of life, be they my friends who are working in GLCs, young graduates trying their hand at small businesses, hawkers finding some space to make a living or single mothers looking for jobs to support their children, I have found that much of their concerns are not particularly 'Malay'. Their sentiments are no different from other Malaysians in similar situations and indeed, are *Malaysian* concerns.

I accept that race is still relevant even in the 21st century. People will always be conscious of their roots and heritage. Nevertheless, it is possible to move away from our obsession with race. It is possible for our policies to be developed based on merit and need, which will foster

Malay progress at the same time. Ethnicity ought to remain a helpful and powerful marker of identity, but policies should be formulated with common challenges as the dominant consideration. It should never be a reason to exclude people or make them feel unwanted in the country of their birth.

How would such a change benefit the Malays? By shifting to a needs-based affirmative action programme, the plight of Malays who truly deserve assistance will continue to be addressed, while the culture of dependency that has emerged from the NEP will be dismantled. By moving to an inclusive political system based on cooperation rather than confrontation, the Malays can get broader support from all the communities to face the multiple challenges that globalisation brings.

The NEP is and always was a top-down phenomenon. Even when Mahathir shifted the NEP to be driven by the private instead of the public sector, it was still essentially a government-led, trickle-down form of ersatz capitalism. With the changing world today, we need to make Malay advancement sustainable by generating more of it from within the community.

We already have the capacity to do so, but we need to empower the community to harness it. This will require a radical rethinking about the issues that have confronted our community for so long.

These challenges are elaborated on in this book: the emerging new politics, forging a people's economy, resolving the education question, the position of Islam in a multiracial society and the unravelling of the social fabric.

However, this paradigm shift should and in fact, can be done within the spirit of the Constitutional consensus that underpins this nation. We cannot and do not have to compromise on the Constitutional provisions on the status of the Malay Rulers, the position of Bahasa Malaysia as the National language, Islam as the religion of the Federation and the special position of the Malays. These provisions were guaranteed in the negotiations to achieve our Independence and should be maintained to

reflect the historical context of Malaysia as a nation.

But just as we must not forget our past, so too must we face the challenges of the future. The future of the Malays cannot be separated from other Malaysians, and I will touch on this at the end of the book by exploring the idea of the 'Malaysian Dream'.

Some might then wonder why I am writing a book that seemingly addresses purely Malay concerns when the basic thrust of the book itself is towards accepting the reality of the Bangsa Malaysia. I would argue that this book is necessary given the fact that Malays have been indoctrinated to believe that any move towards the latter will result in them losing out.

Furthermore, as the Malays form the demographic majority, Malaysia as a whole cannot change if they do not see the necessity for this change. Achieving a Bangsa Malaysia is contingent upon shifting the discourse from Malay supremacy to that of Malay leadership.

What does this mean? To me, it represents a Malay community that is committed to expand opportunities for all Malaysians. My dream is for my people to be confident of their faith and their traditions, and at the same time value life in a multiracial society. I hope that my children and their children—indeed all Malaysian children—will one day live in a country that is home to all.

The Malays must show leadership and the non-Malays too must play their role to end the zero-sum game that has bogged us down for so long in order to achieve this. Malaysia can only succeed if its entire people comes together to make the national project work. The one reason that should compel us to do this is that it is simply the right thing to do.

I believe the Malays of the 21st century, especially the young, are ready for this. We have the confidence to face the future while continuing to hold on to our roots. Our country has achieved this much because earlier generations had the courage to make the right decisions. The burden is now on us.

For Review only

A NEW POLITICAL PARADIGM

8 MARCH 2008: WHICH WAY FORWARD?

The General Elections held on 8 March 2008 shocked pundits and the public alike. The result—BN's second ever loss of its powerful two-third majority as well as the fall of four state governments in addition to PAS' retaining Kelantan—was beyond the expectation of most people. I managed to get 55.8 percent of the popular votes in the Seri Setia state constituency in Kelana Jaya, Selangor, and many others obtained even more impressive results!

Many commentators—including those who ignored the signs when the early results were announced on the evening of 8 March and pretended it was business as usual for BN—then changed their opinions as people debated, discussed and deliberated on the causes and effects of the shocking results.

UMNO had gone into the election fanning racial sentiments within the Malay community,¹ while PAS and Keadilan both reached out to the non-Malays, as did the DAP with the Malays. Although it was unsurprising that the Chinese and Indian minorities voted overwhelmingly against BN, it was significant that the Malays swung towards PR as well, albeit to a smaller extent.

Even then, urban Malays showed a shift closer to that of the non-Malay communities, indicating that they were willing to give the more moderate and consensual approach of what became the PR a chance.²

In actual numbers, the ranks of the Malay MPs increased from 123 in 2004 to 130. This dispels the notion that the 2008 General Election 'broke the power of the Malays' in any way.

Many factors, which we are all aware of, contributed to the result. The BN suffered from a weak leadership and in-fighting while costs of living and crime rates went up. Keadilan, led by the recently-released Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, campaigned aggressively and struck an informal understanding with PAS and DAP, while the Malaysian blogosphere reached a critical mass and provided a powerful medium for discontent that avoided the country's media controls.

If some took 8 March as a freak result, the 2008 Permatang Pauh by-election in August emphasised the mood for change. Anwar's wife, Keadilan President Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail stood down after nine years and three elections as MP, to make room for her husband.

Broadly speaking, the BN approached the by-election with the same strategy they had in March. Permatang Pauh is, after all, almost 70 percent Malay. Perhaps UMNO's strategists assumed even the Malays

1 The definition of Malay itself is a contentious subject. A Malay, as described in this book, generally refers to the legal definition provided in Article 160 of the Federal Constitution: "a person who professes Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to Malay custom and who has at least one ancestor from the Malay Peninsula or Singapore". However, in the case of the Malays prior to Independence, we will refer to them as an ethnic group. There has been debate between defining Malays as the specific ethnic group from Sumatra or as the broad Austronesian people inhabiting Southeast Asia including for example, the Javanese, the Bugis and the Minangkabau. A brief analysis can be found in Syed Husin Ali's *The Malays: Their Problems and Future* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2008), while a more academic and broad perspective is provided by Barnard, Timothy P. (ed.), *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).

2 Ong Kian Ming in 'Making Sense of the Political Tsunami', *Malaysiakini* 11 March 2008 estimated that the overall swing of Malay voters against BN was about 5 percent, compared to 30 percent for the Chinese and 35 percent for the Indians. But in the west coast of the peninsula, in particular urban areas, the Malay shift was greater. Ong pointed out that it would be impossible for seats like Balik Pulau, Gombak and Lembah Pantai to fall without a sizeable swing in the Malay vote. Furthermore, Kedah, a state in the Malay belt, also fell to PR with a swing of 12.7 percent.

who voted for the Opposition in March might have regrets due to the scale of the UMNO defeat and PR's persistent multiracial agenda. In addition, a new sodomy allegation had been made against Anwar, echoing the sacking in 1998. The accuser even swore on the Qu'ran the day before nomination day for added effect and this was broadcasted throughout the constituency during the entire campaign.

Yet, the people of Permatang Pauh rejected UMNO's dog-whistle politics. Anwar won with a 15,671 majority, bigger than his wife's 13,388 margin in March. Malays, especially young Malays, flocked overwhelmingly to vote for Anwar.

This result was further confirmed in Kuala Terengganu, where the UMNO incumbent MP passed away at the end of 2008. The by-election in a constituency where 88 percent of the voters were Malays was won by PAS candidate, Abdul Wahid Endut with over 2,500 votes over the BN candidate.

Some went as far as to claim that racial politics had come to an end. That is, perhaps, being overly optimistic. We only have to note the worry many Malays expressed, regardless of BN's scaremongering, in the period immediately after the elections to understand that race still matters.

A friend of mine from my college days happened to be a registered voter in my constituency and assisted my campaign. Not long after the elections, he met me in my constituency office.

"I managed to persuade my mother, an UMNO supporter to give you her vote this time around," he told me, "but now she's starting to get worried. She thinks that the big swing against BN is jeopardising the Malay interest."

At the same time, just as many were not too confident going into the elections; the euphoria and excitement generated after 8 March created a level of expectation that was unrealistic. Many wanted things to change overnight, while some saw the victory as a way to share the spoils of war and thus wanted more of the same to continue, only

under a different name.

The challenge after 8 March was to manage these expectations and focus on the big picture. We need to continue delivering tangible changes while assuring existing players in the establishment that they still have a role to play. We need to convince the Malays that they will truly benefit from the new administration, contrary to what BN is making it out to be.

What seems certain, however, is that Malaysian politics will never be the same again. The results showed that the 21st century Malay was ready to listen to different ideas if political parties had the courage to make that argument and give more consideration to non-racial factors in their political calculation. The younger Malays, especially were more discerning. BN had vacated the political centre that was its strength in the past, and now PR is trying hard to fill that void. Only by seizing the position can Malays and Malaysians as a whole be driven forward.

The 8 March elections was truly a historic chapter in Malaysian politics that caught many Malaysians by surprise. Such an event could only have happened due to a range of factors all pointing to the same direction, something that probably takes place once or twice in a lifetime. What is important is that we ensure we grab the opportunities that emerge to push for change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad is presently the Member of Parliament for Setiawangsa, elected Member of the KEADILAN Central Leadership Council and Chief Organising Secretary of the party.

He was born in 1982 in Kuala Lumpur and grew up in Petaling Jaya. He attended La Salle Petaling Jaya before attending MCKK and Kolej Yayasan UEM. He read law at King's College London on a PNB Scholarship.

He came back to Malaysia and worked at PNB before becoming private secretary to Anwar Ibrahim from 2006 to 2008.

Nik Nazmi was the youngest elected representative in the 2008 general election when he won the Seri Setia state seat in Selangor. He was political secretary to Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim until 2010 when he was appointed as KEADILAN's Communication Director. From 2013 to 2014 he was the Deputy Speaker of the Selangor State Assembly. He was elected as KEADILAN Youth Leader in 2014 and the first Pakatan Harapan Youth Leader in 2017.

In 2014 he was appointed as the Selangor State Executive Councillor for Education, Human Capital Development, Science, Technology and Innovation.

Nik Nazmi has written books in Malay and English. His first two books, *Moving Forward* and *Coming of Age*, were shortlisted for the Star Popular Reader Choice Awards while *9 May 2018* was a MPH bestseller. His columns appear in *The Edge*, *Sinar Harian*, *Malaysiakini* and *Sin Chew Daily*.

Passionate about education, Nik Nazmi is patron and co-founder of the Mentari Project, a voluntary children's empowerment project at a low-cost housing estate and patron of Setiawangsa Rangers FC, a grassroots football club.

He is Chairman of the Selangor Public Library Corporation and is a member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Budget.