

MIC chief cautions PM on Indian support
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MIC president G Palanivel today cautioned the prime minister that the government can only ignore the MIC at the BN's peril.

In his policy address at the party's annual 65th general meeting at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) in Putrajaya, Palanivel (below) said that this is because MIC's requests for assistance for the Indian community will impact on the 850,000 Indian voters.

"The BN should realise the problems of our community because if we are not careful, we could be in danger of losing our critical position in the politics of this country.

"If you (PM Najib Abdul Razak) can fulfill (our requests), you can be rest assured that Indian votes will automatically return to the BN," he said, drawing resounding cheers and an standing ovation.

Reinforcing MIC's influence in the polls, Palanivel said that his party has about 600,000 members nationwide, of which 390,000 are voters.

"This will make MIC a powerful vote block and a formidable force in the national politics of our country," he said.

He also noted that trends in the Tenang, Merlimau and Kerdu by-elections show that the MIC has managed to increase BN's votes.

"The Indians have awakened to certain realisations, which augur well for both the MIC as well as the BN," he said.

Long wish-list

In his speech, which was largely an appeal to the premier, Palanivel spelled out a long wish-list:

- * a budget to assist the economic development of Indian community
- * small business loan facility and more participation of Indians under the Tukar programme to revamp small businesses
- * immediate financial assistance for those below the poverty line
- * death benefit insurance scheme for all Indians
- * financial assistance for cultural and religious affairs
- * scholarships for students and 1,000 places for Indian students in matriculation courses
- * education development assistance
- * more job opportunities in the civil service
- * fair promotion opportunities for Indians in the civil service
- * directorships and a quota of 10 percent job opportunities in government-linked companies for Indians

'If you can deliver, we will deliver'

Commenting on these demands in his keynote address speech soon after, the PM said: "If you can deliver, we shall deliver."

Elaborating further at a press conference, Najib said that the government is "seriously looking at implementing (the requests)".

"By and large, it is something we want to do but the challenge is implementation," he said.

Also at the press conference was former MIC president S Samy Vellu, who had earlier received a warm applause from the plenary.

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