

**Too many chiefs, too few Indians?
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When Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak promoted the MIC president, G Palanivel, to become a full minister, no one was shocked. It was typical of Najib's arrogance and lack of leadership to put politics over policies, material goods over meritocracy, enticement over engagement.

Whilst Palanivel's promotion served to highlight Najib's hubris, lack of focus and his deepening moral decline, it also showed his desperation to win the next general election. If policies won't work, then political manoeuvring will.

Isn't our Prime Minister's Department staffed with ministers who have come in through the back door or whom many consider bootlickers? Many will be familiar with the expression Too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

More importantly, the promotion does not make sense at a time when the government tells us to adopt austerity measures and that it, too, might go bankrupt.

Perhaps, Samy Vellu (left) could be stripped of his pseudo ministerial status, which must cost the taxpayer several millions, and redirect this allocation to Palanivel.

What is so extraordinary about Samy Vellu, our 'special envoy' who is given a ministerial rank? What does he know? Why is he paid over RM27,000 monthly and given "conveniences and other allowances" as well as a staff of six and an office in Plaza Sentral, Kuala Lumpur?

Why will Najib not take stock of the situation? His lack of scruples meant he resorted to his "deal or no deal", RM5 million election gimmick, as in Sibu - his "You help me, I help you" moment of infamy.

When will Najib understand that the public purse does not belong to him? When will this product of a respected English public school and a graduate of an equally prestigious university realise that blackmail and bribery would not be condoned by his alma maters?

At the 65th MIC general assembly, Palanivel had urged Najib to reward "hardworking" Indians from the estates, and road and railway workers whose toil had helped build Malaysia. He wanted Najib to increase the budget allocation and form a special unit to help the Indian community.

He said, "The Indian community is waiting for your good moves, sir, good announcements and good plans. If you can fulfill all the requirements that I have put forward... you can rest assured that the Indian votes will automatically return to Barisan Nasional."

Najib's response was: "There must be an understanding. Can you all deliver for Barisan Nasional? You can deliver and we will deliver".

There are more questions raised by both Palanivel's and Najib's statements.

The most important being: What has BN and MIC done for the Indian community in the 54 years since independence?

Come every election, the Indians will be told that BN/MIC are the only parties for them. Then we hear that the MIC representative is hardly seen until the next election.

Facing a multitude of problems

The Indians face a multitude of problems such as the following: Not being issued with birth certificates or identity cards. Terrible conditions in Tamil schools. Tamil schools which are not legally sited. A lack of

proper burial sites or graveyards. Demolition of temples. Temples without land titles. High suicide rates. High dropout rates in school. High crime rates and gangsterism. High levels of domestic violence in families. High levels of poverty.

These are not new problems. They have been around since independence but what have the elected MIC politicians done about resolving them? How strong is their commitment?

In the 2010 census, Indians made up 7 percent of the 28 million population. The Ninth Malaysian Plan stated that Indians controlled 1.2 percent of the corporate wealth. Contrast this decline with TimeAsia's report of 1.5 percent in 2000 with corresponding figures for the Malays (19.4 percent) and Chinese (38.5 percent).

So is looking after 2 million Indians very difficult? Or are there more Indians than the official statistics claim? Moreover, are the allegations about elected MIC politicians lining their own coffers and ignoring the electorate to be believed?

So how does Palanivel (right in photo) attempt to woo the Indians? He is beginning to sound like Najib, who told an audience in Sepang after his return from a trip to the Vatican, ostensibly to improve ties between the Christians and Muslims in Malaysia, that he would only respect Christians if the Christians would respect him.

Both Palanivel and Najib have to realise that respect is earned, just as people's votes, have to be earned.

If the Indian vote is increasingly difficult for BN to command then perhaps it is the politicians who ought to realise that race can never be used to win votes.

Palanivel is wrong to say that the Indian votes "will automatically return to Barisan Nasional". MIC does not represent all Indians.

For almost a month, Dr D Jeyakumar of the Parti Sosialis Malaysia has been detained without charge. Were there protests from MIC about this illegal detention? Palanivel may have demanded the release of the PSM 6, but he was only vocal in the days before they were freed.

If Palanivel thinks MIC is the champion of the Indians, he might want to do a lot of soul searching and footwork.

In Sungei Siput, some members of the community allege that during Samy Vellu's reign, the ex-MIC leader did very little to alleviate the suffering of the poor Indians in the community.

'Poverty did not exist in Sungei Siput'

When it came to election time, when freebies and food were in abundance at MIC functions, it was alleged that the ex-MIC leader would proudly boast that poverty did not exist in Sungei Siput.

He obviously did not do his homework or go on a walkabout. Families living on RM300 a month and living in dilapidated shacks were common. It was also alleged that anyone who dared contradict Samy Vellu with regard to poverty, would receive a visit from his thugs.

During the recent furore with the PSD scholarships, one poor Indian teenager in the area who scored 8 As was refused a scholarship to do medicine. She decided to ask an MIC politician for assistance to secure funds. He in turn, allegedly asked her, "What's in it for me?"

If Palanivel thinks the MIC can deliver the votes, he might want to reconsider his moves.

Actions always speak louder than words. But this advice should perhaps be heeded by Najib more than anyone else, for as we enter the fasting month of Ramadan, Najib might want to reflect on his deeds and

his conduct.

How can he consider himself to be a true and pious Muslim when corruption is the order of the day in Umno/BN?

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