

## **Kapar MIC using cash to lure BN support?**

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**By Nicholas Wong**

Thousands of Indian residents of Kapar, Selangor have reportedly been receiving cash handouts from MIC over a number of weekends since last month in an alleged attempt to canvass support for the BN in the coming general election.

NONEHowever, Kapar MIC division that was behind the exercise, has strongly denied that it was a vote-buying exercise, insisting the money was for MIC branch members only.

Kapar MIC chief T Ganesan, when asked about reports of residents in Taman Sentosa, Kapar, receiving envelopes containing RM20, told Malaysiakini that residents only "goods" were distributed to them, not cash.

The RM20 handouts were "allowance" for local MIC members, not meant for the public, he said.

NONEExplaining that as the exercise had been held in a public space, it was unavoidable that some members of the public who also happened to be there may have gotten hold of "a few the envelopes".

"We can't just say 'don't take it'," he said, adding that such events were being carried out throughout Malaysia.

"I assure you that it is not pancing undi (fishing for votes)," he said when contacted by Malaysiakini yesterday.

Thousands received the cash

The exercise reportedly began around the May 13 weekend, and is still being ongoing today, according to a resident from Taman Sentosa in Kapar town, who requested anonymity.

NONEThe technician in his early twenties told Malaysiakini that MIC representatives from the constituency including Ganesan were holding events around town to distribute cash to the majority Indian population there.

He said that recipients were initially asked to vote for BN if they wanted the cash, but they soon dropped such direct references.

His family members as well as his neighbours had all received the RM20, adding that none are MIC members.

On the May 13 weekend, roughly 500 residents per day showed up to collect the cash, said the technician.

NONEThe exercise was said to have continued over the next several weekends at different locations around the town.

He also complained that prior to the exercise, residents received anonymous phone calls and threatening text messages advising them to vote for the BN.

However, Malaysiakini was unable to secure a copy of the said SMS.

Residents were also told that they would receive RM200 for registering as voters at a nearby centre, although this never materialised, he added.

His accounts were corroborated by a neighbour, a lorry driver in his mid-20s, who told Malaysiakini his wife's family had also received the RM20.

Paid 'vote checking' exercise

Malaysiakini citizen journalist Annantharajan Palaniandy's visit to one such event at Taman Sentosa on Sunday, May 27 also paints a different story from Ganesan's.

NONEAnnantharajan confirmed that cash was being given out in envelopes at the event, but did not see any indication at the venue of the event being restricted to only MIC members.

Instead, the organisers on site claimed that it was an exercise to 'check the eligibility' of residents' voter status.

Held at an open field near Jalan Kapar, the organisers erected tents and set up a counter to administer the handouts.

The event was split into morning and evening sessions, with the latter pulling over a thousand people.

Envelopes with RM20 notes were handed out to people "pre-registered" for the event with a photocopy of their MyKad, as their names were read off a list.

NONEHowever, when the attendees exceeded the 400 registered recipients limit, the others were turned away.

When asked, Ganesan said the funds came from the party and the Prime Minister's Department.

Questioned on the timing of the event, he denied it was meant to drum up support for MIC or the BN ahead of the coming general election.

"These are very traditional events. We're sure all parties are doing the same," he said, explaining that sometimes NGOs would approach them to organise such events.

The biggest parliamentary seat in Selangor, Kapar is a Malay-majority seat but has a sizeable Indian population, comprising about 15 percent of the electorate in the area.

MP: Kapar indians 'not stupid'

Kapar MP S Manikavasagam criticised the cash handouts as a case of "double standards" and an indication that the government was not serious about helping the Indian community.

Kapar MP S Manikavasagam sex tape report porn cd "It is considered fine when BN hands out cash, but when Pakatan Rakyat distributes aid, it is deemed corruption," he said when contacted by Malaysiakini on Thursday.

'If they are really serious (about helping the people) then they should work on

infrastructure, and raise people's standard of living," said the PKR parliamentarian (left).

He claimed that he was aware of such alleged vote-buying efforts in his constituency, saying that people had complained of MIC calling on Tamil schools and houses offering money.

However, he does not foresee such efforts undermining Pakatan's performance in the coming polls, saying that "Kapar Indians are smart".

Subang MP R Sivarasa also panned the cash handout practice, adding, however, that he had not heard of it occurring in his constituency.

NONE "It is something that should be prohibited by law," he said, explaining that in Malaysia such exercises were only barred during election campaign periods, leaving open the loophole for the practice.

He acknowledged that such tactics could still hold sway among some of the poorer communities, but said that as a whole, more people were "seeing the bigger picture".

He added that he would personally feel insulted if offered RM20 to vote for the BN.

"My reaction would be, 'What do you think my worth is (to be bought over for RM20)?'," he said when contacted by Malaysiakini.

Kuala Selangor MP Dzulkefly Ahmad described the whole affair as "preposterous", adding that he, too, has come to learn of 30 June 2012 such handouts in his constituency.

"That's how they regard people, they think that with just RM20 they can buy people," he said in a phone interview with Malaysiakini yesterday, adding that the move degrades "the Indian community".

Although his four years of service have not been perfect, the PAS parliamentarian believes his overall performance would be the more important factor, rather than cash handouts in his constituency.