

## **Hindraf yet to decide on GE13 backing**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) has yet to decide who it will back in the 13th general election as it is still in talks with both BN and Pakatan Rakyat for endorsement of its blueprint to uplift the Indian Malaysian poor, says the movement's national advisor N Ganesan.

"Our target date for when our door closes is April 18. At that time, we may get the endorsement from Pakatan or BN... we will then make a call for Indians in the country to vote Pakatan or BN.

"If both of them say yes, then we have another decision to make or if neither of them show up, then we take the position it doesn't make any difference to vote and our call will be to abstain from voting," he told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Ganesan (left) added that it was unfair to accuse Hindraf of selling out by meeting BN as it is also talking with Pakatan with another meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

He said Hindraf had met Pakatan in six formal and 15 informal meetings since September last year.

"The last contact with Pakatan was with (PAS vice-president) Husam Musa and (incumbent Kuala Selangor MP) Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad when (Hindraf chief) P Waythamoorthy was in hospital on April 1," he said.

He added that ex-Hindraf members who are pro-Pakatan should help lobby for the opposition coalition to endorse Hindraf's blueprint instead of attacking the movement.

A group of pro-Pakatan Hindraf activists had on Tuesday hit out at Hindraf for meeting with BN and demanded that the movement make clear its stance on who it will support in the general election.

'Voting never helped Indians before'

Meanwhile, Ganesan said Hindraf has had three follow up meetings with BN after it first met Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (below) on March 25.

"The subsequent three meetings were with a team appointed by the prime minister that discussed our issues. There is no outcome yet, but we will know very soon," he said.

Ganesan declined to reveal details of the negotiations other than to say that the team comprised of politicians and civil servants.

Asked if the negotiations with BN include request for seats to contest in the general election, he replied: "We are in the midst of discussions, it is not so advanced to that stage, we have not yet made the request to BN".

It was revealed that Hindraf had requested for seven parliamentary seats and ten state seats during discussions with Pakatan, but Ganesan said that was not the reason why previous talks with the opposition failed.

"Our focus is always the blueprint, if the reason (by Pakatan) for the breakdown is the blueprint, then it will not look good, that is why the reason given is the seats," he said.

Ganesan said Pakatan had previously agreed in principle to Hindraf's blueprint but refuses the movement's request for a binding agreement for implementation.

However, he said Hindraf's door was still opened to all sides.

"We don't owe allegiance to any political party in the country, we owe allegiance to the people we represent," he said.

Asked if abstaining from voting will ultimately disenfranchise the Indian community, Ganesan said: "I don't see voting has been in the interest of Indians either all these years".

"By not voting, perhaps it will make a new point about the significance of the Indian vote... the winners and losers will be able to see the pullback and we will make our point," he said.

Hindraf must start somewhere

When asked to respond to criticism that BN lacked credibility to negotiate with Hindraf, Ganesan replied: "The question of credibility is always on our mind and that is why we are asking for a binding endorsement".

Former Hindraf information chief S Jayathas, who is now with PKR, had said that

BN's refusal to allow a second autopsy for death in custody victim C Sugumar, and take action against incumbent Kulim-Bandar Baharu MP Zulkifli Noordin (left) for insulting Hindus showed the ruling coalition was insincere in its negotiation.

Responding to this, Ganesan added: "We need to have this starting point, we cannot only start when all the problems have gone away, we start in spite of these problems to work out solutions.

"There may be problems today, they don't change overnight but we are bringing up these issues with them (BN), problems that have existed for over 50 years and will take several years to correct."

Elaborating on the BN's and Pakatan's manifestoes, Ganesan said both of them adopted a "trickle down" approach and this was insufficient to help the Indian community.

"A trickle down approach to development just doesn't happen... What we are proposing is a targeted and focused approach, we target this segment because they have unique problems, not because we are racist," he said.

An example of their targeted approach, he said, was the creation of the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) scheme to specifically address the problems of communities who were landless and jobless.

On the Gelang Patah Declaration, a manifesto by DAP for the Indian community, Ganesan said the party would do to best to just endorse its blueprint as the document already contained some elements of Hindraf's plan.

Meanwhile, Hindraf deputy chairperson W Sambulingam said only the movement was privy to details of its discussions with BN and Pakatan.

"Whatever that does not come from us are just rumours or claims and are not true," he said.