

Penang MIC head denies boycott of Subra event

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By Susan Loone

The absence of Penang MIC chief S Karuppattan and members of many branches at an event hosted by Health Minister S Subramaniam in Bukit Jambul last night, has made it seem that a "boycott" is in place, according to a source.

When contacted, however, Karuppattan denied that he had boycotted the event, saying he had informed Subramaniam that he would not be able to attend.

NONESubramaniam (left in photo), the MIC deputy chief is expected to take on president G Palanivel (right in photo) in the upcoming party polls. This has paved the way for much excitement and speculation.

The source, a high-ranking leader in the state MIC echelon, claimed that - days before the event - branch members had been told not to attend the dinner, lest this creates disunity within the party.

As a result, members from only 180 of the 274 branches turned up for the function, which included health screening for MIC members by the Penang Hospital.

Former acting state MIC liason chief L Krishnan, however, denied that Subramaniam was in Penang to lobby support for his campaign.

"There is nothing wrong for a health minister, who is also MIC deputy chief, to attend a dinner and meet with the members," he quipped.

However, Karuppattan questioned the timing of the event, saying that some members - including himself - felt it was not appropriate to hold it when Subramaniam is likely to go for the party presidency.

"It is nothing personal. It is just that the timing is questionable as Subramaniam is also going around the country visiting members when the party election is very near," he explained.

"I am not aware of messages (being circulated) to tell branches not to attend the event because there are already some members who felt that the timing was not appropriate."

Asked why only MIC members were at an event hosted by the Health Ministry,

Karuppannan claimed that the health screening had been extended to others attending the dinner as well.

"So, maybe a more valid reason (for not attending the function) is that many feel they are healthy enough and do not need health screening," said Karuppannan, laughing.

Still, some members are of the opinion that Subramaniam does not have enough support among Penang MIC members.

Not all the leaders of the 180 branches were present, an indication that they want to send him a clear message not to take on Palanivel.

'Renewal process being explained'

It is learnt that Subramaniam is continuing to go around the country, despite resistance from leaders aligned to Palanivel.

The resistance was evident in Perak, where he had to cancel his meeting with state leaders appointed by Palanivel.

In Penang, Subramaniam seemed to enjoy some support, based on the attendance. Ex-state party head K Rajapathy and state Youth chief J Dhinakaran were among those present.

NONESubramaniam, who was presented with gifts and a garland, touched on the future of the party and its capacity to face the 14th general election.

"I spoke about the renewal process of the party, and the changes members can make so that MIC can have a better showing in GE14," he told reporters when asked to translate his speech which had been delivered in Tamil.

"We have to identify our issues and reconnect with the people. We have to understand the younger generation and create a sense of belonging to the party. We have to use the new media to keep up with all the current happenings."

Subramaniam said the BN government and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak have done much via the transformation plans to build a better nation.

However, this has to be explained to the people so that the party can address negative perceptions of MIC or the BN, he said.

"We will continue with Najib's transformation plans. We will start to rectify the deficiencies and work together - the party and federal government," he added.

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