

BN's tough fight to tempt Indian voters
Malaysiakini.com
Aug 25, 2008
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When the Indian voters rejected Barisan Nasional during the last general election, MIC was dumbfounded as to why it has suddenly lost ownership over these voters who since independence have been their traditional backers.
MCPX

With the party becoming irrelevant as a result of its massive loss in the March 8 polls, it decided to take a different approach in this Permatang Pauh by-election to test out new tactics to win over the hearts and minds of these Indian voters.

And MIC now thinks it has hit the right button in answering the question of luring back the Indian voters, not just in Permatang Pauh but nationwide as well.

samy vellu exclusive on tamil schools 080708 06Even before the polling date for this by-election was announced, MIC president S Samy Vellu said that he would be trying to put in a personal touch by seeing all 3,375 Indian voters in this constituency to convince them to vote again for BN.

And he has been doing that in his rounds here since campaigning period started on Aug 16.

On top of that, the MIC chief also resorted to give away groceries to the needy Indian voters, reminding them that only a BN representative in Parliament can provide them with continued prosperity.

And in the last leg of the campaigning period, MIC has come up with another method to lure the Indian voters - by giving out free VCDs, of popular songs interspersed with political messages, expounding the virtues of BN and the perils of PKR.

Samy Vellu has been quoted in the media as saying that the give-away VCDs would be provide an opportunity for MIC to tell the voters as to why they should get back to support BN candidate Arif Shah Omar Shah.

The VCDs also contain footage of concerts organised by MIC for the voters. These VCDs are being given to the voters during MIC's house-to-house campaigns.

At the end of the campaign, Samy Vellu declared that he was happy with the response he had elicited from the Indian voters, proudly saying that he was confident they would return to the BN's way.

The opposition's successful tactic

The use of VCDs is surely a tactic lifted by the MIC from the opposition.

During the general election, the opposition played up the Indian voters' sentiments by distributing thousands of VCDs showcasing the demolition of temples and the impact of Hindraf rally to garner support.

permatang pauh election results 310708 That tactic succeeded big time, resulting in a strong switch on Indian voters from the BN to the opposition.

PKR is once again using the same trick to keep the Indian support in Permatang Pauh.

The Hindraf factor is also still relevant in Penang, just as it was during the general election.

Many PKR leaders are quietly smiling with the arrest of nine Hindraf leaders on Sunday for illegal assembly.

"The issue of minority rights is still a big issue here. With the arrest of these Hindraf people, we are sure that many of the fence-sitting Indian voters would have decided to vote against BN," said a PKR leader.

"We are now confident of an additional 500 Indian voters," he added.

A simple street survey undertaken by Malaysiakini also backed the claims made by the PKR that the Indian voters are still keen to vote for PKR's Anwar Ibrahim, hoping that he would bring about the much-needed change as far as race-relations are concerned in this country.

What the voters' feel

Below are some of the comments from local Indian voters:

Sritharan Arumugam

Sritharan Arumugam indian voter permatang pauh 250808 04 What they are claiming about Anwar is not true. When I attend his ceramah, I sense some truth in them. A lot of Indians have faith in him and we believe that he will become a new and much improved prime minister.

He's the only one now who is daringly questioning our rights. Even Samy Vellu didn't do it... he was just a political puppet. Anwar is the only one who is voicing for us now and we believe he will keep his words.

T Narayanasamy

Anwar to win 100 percent of course, because he has the full support from the Chinese community, Malay community and our Indian community. It is based on this that I believe he will win.

M Soosaimanikam

We should give a chance to the new party, if they can't perform then we change them later. It's people who decide at the end of the day. If you want your future generation to do well, then the people must give chance to the new government. And if you are not happy with them, then we change them.

S Thulasiammal

S Thulasiamal indian voter permatang pauh 250808 03.jpg I think the truth lies at Anwar's side. And whoever is telling the truth will win. And definitely Anwar is going to win, because

the truth is in his side.

None of us believe all the allegations made against him.

T Sivalingam

All these years we were blinded. Based on what Anwar is telling us now, we know where the truth is.

Definitely our vote is for Anwar. We are reading papers and watching news, we are witnessing ourselves what they (BN) are doing. We are capable of making a good decision.

P Bubalan

Surely in this by-election, the chances of Anwar winning are very high.

The allegations made against him are something that hard to accept. It is the same thing they did in 1998. And now that he's making a comeback, and when chances are there for him to be the next PM, we believe all these are conspiracy by his political enemies who are trying bring him down.

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