

Helping Indians get ahead is MIC's prime concern

NS-13/5/2007.

■ **Reports by Shamini Darshni, Ranjeetha Pakiam and R. Yasothai**

THE poor track record of Indian students in national examinations must be looked into quickly. They must be encouraged to continue their studies in technical institutions where they can learn saleable skills.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said they should be encouraged to take certificate or diploma courses in professional fields like healthcare and education or join the police force after the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia.

"They can be turned into skilled workers," he said.

About half the Indian students who sit the SPM do not get credits in Bahasa Melayu or English. Only a quarter of those go on to take the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM).

"We must change this trend. We need more Indian students to perform better in the SPM and STPM in order to see a change in occupation and income trends," he said.

Speaking at the 61st MIC general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, he outlined strategies to address issues in the Indian community over the next 50 years.

He said more attention must be given to pre-school, primary and secondary schools.

He also said, without elaborating, that over the next few years, MIC would send the brightest Indian youths to top universities such as Oxford and Cambridge in Britain, and Harvard or Yale in the United States.

Institutions initiated by the MIC, like Maju Institute of Educational Development, TAFE College and the Asian Institute of Medicine, Science and Tech-

nology, must become globally competitive, he added.

On economic development, Samy Vellu said Indian businesses should be encouraged to become public-listed entities and venture into global markets.

"As a political party, we can create the policy framework and provide access to assistance but ultimately it must be people themselves who take up the challenges."

He also said the party was on the lookout for young and capable leaders who could overcome racial politics and act as effective ambassadors in the Barisan Nasional spirit.

"This is our challenge in guiding the younger generation of politicians, that they will truly be able to recognise and appreciate the strength of the different races.

"For the next 50 years, the leaders we seek must be brave enough to make changes and

have goals not only in political thinking but also in political doing," he said.

MIC leaders must go to the ground and identify those in need of homes and ensure that low-income families have access to basic but good housing, he said.

"I call this 'house owning democracy' as it enables each family to own at least one house.

"Awareness of access to housing loans and housing schemes will definitely assist the Indian community to increase their wealth through property ownership," he said.

MIC representatives, he said, must lobby their local authorities for adequate facilities, such as community halls and recreational facilities.

The local representatives could also network with government agencies to organise and fund services to strengthen community cohesion and

reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, he added.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who delivered the official address, remarked that Samy Vellu's speech was different from the previous years as it contained concrete strategies to address issues plaguing the Indian community.

The general assembly also took the time to honour Datin Paduka Jaya Parthiban for her contributions to the party. She received a party medal from the prime minister. She also received the yellow shawl of honour.

On allegations that some state assemblymen had been applying for land under the MIC banner but ended up using the land for their own purposes, Samy Vellu said state assemblymen found guilty of misusing their position to get land would not be allowed to stand in the next general election.