

'I like Najib, but I don't like BN'

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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KLANG, Nov 11 — Support for Datuk Seri Najib Razak among the Indian community here was palpable at a national Deepavali party last night, but the adoration may not translate to the votes he needs to wrest the state back for Barisan Nasional (BN).

Yesterday, thousands thronged to a Deepavali open house at SMK Kampung Jawa here. Many came hoping to catch a glimpse of the country's top leader.

"I'm here to see Najib," 30-year-old M. Sumathi told The Malaysian Insider. "I took a day off for this event. I spent the whole day getting ready to see him."

Like Sumathi, many arrived in support of the prime minister who, in recent months, has engaged with the people through a series of events and activities. These have garnered him both admiration and support, plus the label "cool".

But more extensive interaction with the visitors exposed an undercurrent of discontent with the BN federal government.

"I like Najib, but I don't like BN."

The crowd listens to a speech by Datuk Seri Rais Yatim at the Deepavali open house. —

Picture by Choo Choy May

With that, self-employed L. Perichiappan summed up what could be a potential indicator of the upcoming general election, at least among the community here.

"Najib is a nice man. He wants to bring about changes for the country. But when it comes to implementation, it does not come down to the public," Perichiappan, or Pere as he prefers, said.

"His policies are good for the community and country, but the people under him fail to implement it properly... Only them and their cronies are doing well, the rest are suffering," he explained.

"Najib is sincere. He is trying his best. But his own people are stabbing him in the back."

Shan (sole name given), a caretaker born and raised in Klang, agreed that the flawed implementation of policies was to blame for the lack of faith in BN.

"The 1 Malaysia concept by Najib promotes racial unity, so why is it the Indians and Chinese cannot get equal opportunities like the Bumiputeras?" she asked, pointing out the community's blanket discount for property purchases as one particular bugbear.

"It is also very hard for the Indians and Chinese to get a PTPTN (National Higher Education Fund) loan because of the Bumiputera quota. Why is there such a thing? Better give the loan to people who deserve it than to just fill the quota," Shan said.

"Najib made promises, but he has failed to keep them," she added.

When asked of the present situation in Selangor under Pakatan Rakyat, Pere said the current state government has done more for the people in the past three years as compared to 50 years under BN.

"Pakatan show results. They have given land for schools, temples, churches, and do not discriminate against races. Even the (state) Budget yesterday is better compared to Najib's," he said, referring to Selangor's Budget 2012 as announced by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim on Wednesday.

"It is high time BN gives the opposition a chance to rule. Najib wants to do good, but the damage is already done. Now it's too late."

During his address to the open house visitors, Najib said the government has never taken lightly the plight of Indians in the country and will "never take Indians for granted".

"The government has a special committee to look into problems faced by Indians... I see no reason for the Indian community to not support the government," he said.

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