

MIC Wants To Contest Parliamentary Seat In Kedah Or Penang

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- MIC, which won just three out of nine parliamentary seats it contested in the 2008 general election, is seeking to swap one of its seat in Selangor to another, either Kedah or Penang.

Its president Datuk G. Palanivel said both states had a sizeable Indian population but without any parliamentary seat contested by the Indian-based party.

"We contested four parliamentary seats in Selangor in 2008...why need four when we have a lot of Indians in Penang and Kedah, but no seat," the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department told Bernama in a recent interview.

The third largest party in the Barisan Nasional (BN) lost all four parliamentary seats in Selangor namely Hulu Selangor which was contested by Palanivel, and Kapar, Kota Raja as well as Subang.

It also saw the then party supremo Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu losing in Sungai Siput, as well as Datuk S. Sothinathan in Teluk Kemang, with the party retaining only Cameron Highlands, Segamat and Tapah.

But MIC managed to win back Hulu Selangor through P.Kamalanathan in a by-election in 2010.

"We're now negotiating on the possibility of swapping seats," said Palanivel, who has yet to declare where he would contest in the next general election.

On potential candidates, Palanivel said he was not looking at big changes but rather familiar faces that could bring better results, noting that any announcement would be made at the right time to avoid sabotage.

"Divisions can propose names. But the most important thing is the candidates will be chosen by the party president...I'll make the final decision," he said.

Asked about the community's support towards BN, Palanivel said it was increasing but not as high as 70 to 80 per cent enjoyed by the coalition before the 2008 poll.

Reiterating that Indian support was crucial for BN to retain power and regain the two-third majority it lost in 2008, Palanivel said the increasing support should not be taken for granted as the mood of voters could change during the polls.

Palanivel said it was very important for the government to continue addressing the plight of the community, including concerns over lack of business opportunities as well as issues like promotion of Indian civil servants, crime among youths, jobs in government-linked companies, and housing need.

"We've received many complaints that Indian civil servants are bypassed when it comes to

promotion," he said, adding that vice-president Datuk K. Devamany was heading a committee to look into the matter.

Palanivel said it was heartening that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was trying his best to address such issues, citing the RM100 million fund allocated in the 2012 Budget to Indian entrepreneurs under Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia.

"The Indians are watching every move the MIC and I are making. We can't over promise and under delivered...I've to be careful of what I promise," said the journalist-turned-politician.

He said several issues highlighted by the party had been solved by the government, including those concerning the additional 1,000 places for matriculation programmes, and a RM8 million allocation to set up Suria Cooperative to help retailers.

But Palanivel said efforts to bring the community into mainstream society should not be left to the government and MIC alone, citing the role that could be played by successful businessmen and professionals, as well as temples.

"The temples, for example, can set aside one-fifth of the money they receive to help single mothers and other poor people," he added.

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