

MIC Confident Government Transformation Programmes Attract Indian Support
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GEORGE TOWN, Aug 27 (Bernama) -- The government's transformation programmes, inspired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, could change the Indian community's voting trend in Penang in the coming general election.

State MIC deputy chairman L. Krishnan said, a large portion of the Indian community in the state had returned to support Barisan Nasional (BN) after seeing the party's capability in implementing change and fulfilling promises.

"After the 2008 general election, they found that the BN government was capable of bringing change, such as transformation.

"From reducing crimes, improving people's income irrespective of races, employment opportunities, the government is seen as performing well," he told Bernama here Monday.

He said the Indian community in Penang could feel the effects of the transformation programmes such as opportunities to meet federal leaders to voice their problems.

"In fact, the prime minister himself, has gone to the ground to discuss with the Indians and apologise for past shortcomings...the government change would bring more meaningful assistance to the Indian community and they have been carried out by the prime minister," he said.

Krishnan said the state MIC was now focusing on empowering youths and senior citizens to raise the economic status of the community, empowering Tamil schools and institutions of higher learning, employment opportunities in the public sector, as well as the problem of affordable and low-cost housing.

He said the issue of temples in the state was no longer a major problem as the federal government had provided millions of ringgit to repair and upgrade existing temples, adding that Tamil schools also received the attention of the federal government.

"For example, the largest temple in Penang, the 'Waterfall Temple' was being renovated with RM1.9 million allocation from the federal government," he noted.

Krishnan said the federal government had also provided generous allocations to Tamil primary schools such as Sekolah Tamil Batu Kawan which benefited from a RM6.3 million funding.

He said Sekolah Tamil Valdor received about RM4 million while Sekolah Tamil Subramaniam Bharati obtained RM2.5 million.

"Thus, the allocations are provided in critical issues such as rebuilding schools, education and temple development."

Krishnan said, while employment opportunities for the Indian community in the public sector were increasing with the government opening up more vacancies for the community to join the public sector, the involvement of the Indian community in the private sector was still lacking, especially in senior positions.

He said, of the 811,750 registered voters in the state as of March, the Indian community made up 10.7 per cent or 86,626 voters, as compared to Malays 34.75 per cent, Chinese 54.13 per cent and others 0.45 per cent.

He noted that although the Indian community was not dominant in the state, it was seen as the deciding factor for BN in the state.

Krishnan said the party was now concentrating in the Perai and Bagan Dalam state legislative assembly seats, considering the two constituencies had the largest number of Indian voters at 35.8 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively.

He was confident MIC could recapture the two state seats now under DAP rule, and should the party succeed in winning the Perai and Bagan Dalam seats, it would greatly enhance BN's position.

However, MIC was not neglecting other areas which have significant Indian voters such as Jawi (23 per cent), Bukit Tengah (17 per cent), Bukit Tambun (18 per cent), Sungai Bakap (17 per cent), Kebun Bunga (15 per cent), Padang Kota (14 per cent), Datuk Keramat (14 per cent) and Sungai Pinang (14 per cent).

"The participation of MIC in the state seats is very important and extremely relevant, and if given the opportunity, we would show how to serve the Indian community," he said.

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