

**MIC General Assembly To Rally Party For Final Push To Win Over Indians**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- The 66th annual general assembly of the MIC scheduled for Sunday is set to rally the delegates and other grassroots leaders for the final push of a tough campaign to win over the hearts and minds of the Indian community to the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Party secretary-general Datuk S. Murugesan is optimistic that the serious and continuous work carried out with commitment over the past two years under well-coordinated action plans would turn the tide for the MIC.

Winning back the support of the majority of Indian voters has been a major task of the party following its massive defeat in the 2008 general election when many Indians deserted the BN.

The MIC lost six of the nine parliamentary seats it contested then. It retained only Tapah, Cameron Highlands and Segamat, and recaptured Hulu Selangor in a by-election later.

In an interview with Bernama, Murugesan elaborated on the plans of the largest Indian-based party, saying that it had never taken lightly the plight of the Indians and had helped solve many longstanding problems faced by the community, thanks also to the efforts of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and party president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel.

"The community must understand that these plans are genuine and they are not just for the short term. It will definitely take time to see the outcome. You cannot have one roll-out and think that the MIC has won over the community. There is no short cut," he said.

Murugesan said Palanivel has drawn up strategies to move the government to implement policies and schemes to assist and uplift the Indian community, putting to bed criticism that the party had done enough to bring Indians into the mainstream of society.

Under Budget 2013, RM350 million was allocated for the Tekun Financing Scheme for small to medium entrepreneurs, RM50 million of which was for the Indian Social Entrepreneurship Scheme, he said.

Also, RM50 million was allocated to train 3,200 poor Indian students to acquire industrial skills, and RM100 million was set aside for the upgrading and development of Tamil schools nationwide, he added.

Murugesan stressed that the MIC had always maintained itself as a clean and transparent party, to show voters that the party leaders were better at governing and would continue to embark on issues that were close to the hearts of Indians, namely Tamil schools, university education, and job opportunities for all.

He also said that the party had carried out the voter verification and registration exercise at all its 4,300 branches nationwide, and had also introduced various measures to draw young voters to the party.

"The MIC, together with the (other) Barisan Nasional (components), has implemented several programmes, including the BN Job Fair and the BN Youth Musical Concert, as well as used the new media like Twitter, Facebook and blogs as a way to reach out to the youths," he said.

Recent statistics show that between 60 and 65 per cent of young voters had chosen BN over Pakatan Rakyat as the opposition was good at making promises but not delivering them, he said.

"To be able to attract the Gen Y, the MIC must be able to articulate and tell them that this is what the future holds, that this is the direction the nation is heading to in order to secure a better and stable future for them," he said.

Murugesan said that though the Indian voters were returning to the BN fold and the trend had improved since 2008, the MIC was still working on increasing its Indian vote bank.

"As the Indian community is constantly urging for a transformation within the MIC, the party is in the midst of transforming to be more aggressive to cater to the increasing expectations and challenges facing the community," he said.

Murugesan said the party had received six resolutions, on politics, governmental affairs, education and socio-economic matters, for debate at the assembly, to be attended by 1,500 delegates and 2,000 observers at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

He also said that the assembly, reduced to a single day to save time and cost, would be opened by Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

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