

MIC Leaders Must Change Approach To Address Community Needs - Saravanan
Bernama
8 May, 2013
By S. Chandravathani

KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 (Bernama) -- MIC leaders need to change their approach by becoming more vocal in addressing the needs of the Indian community, said party vice-president Datuk M. Saravanan.

He said it was imperative the MIC leaders represent the community and its needs to address social, economic and political disparities to build an inclusive society.

"The time to rise and change has come. The future has to be more inclusive politics where we walk with our heads held high. I call upon all MIC leaders to represent the community, and not just for namesake," he told Bernama in an interview here Wednesday.

He said the party needed to gain confidence and trust from the community, especially youths.

On the party's performance in the 13th General Election (GE13), Saravanan who retained the Tapah state seat, said it had done well as compared to the last general election in 2008.

"In 2008, there was no opposition government. But in 2013, MIC and Barisan Nasional (BN) fought a tough battle with opposition governments, where the pact was ruling in few hot states namely, Penang, Kedah and Selangor, respectively.

"We (MIC) managed to bring a sizeable number of Indian votes to the coalition, thanks to PM Najib's (Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's) approach in introducing various initiatives and measures aimed at bringing the community towards greater success," he explained.

Dismissing the claim that MIC performed badly in the GE13, Saravanan said the party managed to win four parliamentary seats as compared to 2008, when it only secured three parliamentary seats.

"We are still a relevant party despite the many claims. However, the party must change its operational image to the new needs of the community," he said.

The GE13 saw MIC winning four of the nine parliamentary seats and five of the 18 state seats contested.

Besides Saravanan, three others who snatched victories are party president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel (Cameron Highlands), deputy president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam (Segamat) and Putera co-coordinator P. Kamalanathan (Hulu Selangor).

As for state seats, only five MIC candidates managed to win, namely three in Johor and one each in Melaka and Negeri Sembilan.

In the 2008 General Election, MIC suffered a painful defeat where it won only three of the nine parliamentary seats and seven of the 19 state seats contested.

A political analyst said that the 67-year-old party needed 'soul-searching' and 're-branding' to transform itself to become a party for Indians, and not merely for the Indian elite.

"MIC can become relevant if the party resolves more issues faced by the community such as poverty, gangsterism and lack of economic opportunities," said dean of Universiti Utara Malaysia's School of International Studies Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani.

Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) said MIC did change much as compared to 2008, as it won an extra parliamentary seat, making it four this time. However, it did not perform well in state seats.

"From my observation, there was a shift among the Indian and Malay voters, compared to the Chinese, which has affected the performance of the MIC candidates in the general election," he said.

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