

The Kajang Indian vote: A hope and test for Anwar
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Kajang candidate Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had part of the crowd swooning at the Sri Maha Mariamman temple in Taman Delima yesterday with his rendition of popular Tamil '60s song Nan Anai Ittal.

The song is about a leader's pledge to solve a community's problems or as the song goes – to make sure they shed no more tears – if those folk gave him the power to do so.

But what Anwar probably doesn't realise is that their votes for him (when it happens) are being given because another leader had made a similar pledge two years ago but did not deliver on his promise.

So, just as Anwar made his pledge yesterday afternoon to a crowd of 800 worshippers, who are key opinion makers in Kajang's Indian Malaysian community, these people have told him exactly what he must do to make sure they shed no more tears.

And if he doesn't do so, Anwar may just end up like that leader, who had appealed for the community's "trust" and lost it.

Pinning their hopes on the 'Menteri Besar to be'

The pressure for Anwar to start living up to his pledge was made in the form of a memorandum given to him by the temple committee.

The temple, said the committee's advisor Vasantha Kumar Krishnan, has been appealing to the state government for help in resolving a dispute with a housing developer who wants the land the temple sits on.

The committee claims to have proof that the temple has been on the same site for at least 150 years. Back then, it was part of the Breamar estate and was used by the plantation workers who lived there.

Without the temple committee's knowledge, the land was sold to a private developer during the Barisan Nasional (BN) state administration in 2006.

Negotiations between the temple committee and the developer have reached a stalemate. And the temple has asked the Pakatan Rakyat Selangor government to help resolve the impasse.

The matter however has still not been resolved by the state administration.

A worshipper who has knowledge of the issue said the committee is pinning their hopes on Anwar to find a solution.

“We know he is going to become Menteri Besar. Otherwise why contest in Kajang? That is why we gave the memorandum to him. So that he can settle this,” said the worshipper, who wished to remain anonymous.

Trust given and taken back

In January 2012, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had announced that he was going to build a new Tamil school in nearby Mahkota Cheras for the people of Kajang and Dusun Tua.

Vasantha Kumar claimed Najib, known for his appeal that the Indian community give him nambikei (trust), pledged RM 6 million for the project and that the federal government announced it already had a site.

In May 2013, many of Kajang’s Indian Malaysian voters gave Najib their trust.

Now, they are furious. Not one pillar has been erected on the site. On February 14, the community’s leaders submitted a memorandum to Najib demanding the federal government keep its promise.

So this time around the Indian community is expected to put their “trust” in Anwar, said Narayanan Perumal, a former municipal councillor.

“We have seen how things have changed and the difference between how Pakatan and BN rules. With Pakatan they have treated everyone the same.”

What has really been appreciated is the state government’s annual contribution to all Tamil schools in the state. Since 2008, it has given RM4 million to all Tamil schools in Selangor every year.

The state government has also given out RM6.1 million to 321 Hindu temples throughout Selangor from 2008 to 2012.

The same treatment has been accorded to Chinese temples, Gurdwaras, churches and mosques.

Yet all that goodwill could still be lost come the 14th general election if Anwar and the state government do not find a way to keep the Sri Maha Mariamman temple where it is.

“The state government has not been totally transparent with us either on this issue. So let’s see what happens with Anwar,” said another worshipper

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