

Sedition blitz, 1Malaysia 'joke' will cost Barisan votes, says MIC
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By LOOI SUE-CHERN

An MIC central working committee member today warns that voters, namely the non-Malays, will reject Barisan Nasional in the next general election if Putrajaya is not careful in implementing its policies.

Datuk Henry Benedict Asirvatham, in his speech at the Penang MIC Deepavali open house took a swipe at Putrajaya over the 1Malaysia slogan, the sedition blitz and inaction against Datuk Ibrahim Ali's "burn bibles" threat.

He said the 1Malaysia slogan is a "mockery and mere window dressing without real values behind it" and risks becoming a laughing matter if the current "trend" was left unchecked and uncorrected.

Asirvatham cited one of the issues that had "disappointed" everyone was the sedition blitz against ordinary citizens and opposition leaders over their comments and speeches.

Such prosecutions, he said had resulted in two people seeking political asylum in other countries, referring to sex blogger Alvin Tan and student activist Ali Abdul Jalil, who had fled to the United States and Sweden, respectively, to escape charges against them.

"Since Merdeka, only on very rare occasions do we see our citizens seeking asylum overseas. No one wants to leave this beautiful and peaceful country.

"However, we find that Perkasa and its president Datuk Ibrahim Ali can say anything, condemn other religions and hurt the feelings of other races and still get away with it.

"He can say burn the bibles and the A-G (Attorney-General) says it is alright," he said.

Ibrahim had remarked that Bahasa Malaysia Bibles using the word "Allah" to refer to God should be burned in response to allegations that such publications were being distributed at a school in Penang in January last year. The "Bible distribution" allegations were later proven to be false.

The A-G's Chambers has since decided not to press charges as police investigations found that Ibrahim's remark was only directed at the particular incident and not meant as a threat to larger society.

Asirvatham, who is also the state MIC treasurer and Bagan division chief, said the

1Malaysia slogan preached by Putrajaya should be more than just about "giving BR1M (1Malaysia People's Aid) to Malaysians".

"(Our) Laws also must be seen to be implemented against anyone without considering race or religion.

"This latest trend is worrying because it has given ample ammunition to the opposition to stir and fuel anti-BN sentiments, which is also growing," he said.

Meanwhile, Henry also criticised his own party leadership, namely president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel over their choice of candidates for the Bagan Dalam and Prai state seats, which MIC contested but lost in the polls last year.

He claimed the party had a fighting chance to win Bagan Dalam from DAP and the matter was highlighted to the party president.

"But our views fell on deaf ears. We lost the seat not because we didn't have enough support but because the local sentiments of the political parties and voters were not taken into account by the president.

"Many of us also feel that Penang MIC has been completely neglected and ignored by our president," he said.

Without any assemblyman from MIC to represent the Indian community in Pakatan Rakyat-held Penang, Henry said Penang MIC should have had someone appointed as Senator.

He said the position would have given MIC a platform to work and regain the trust of Indian voters in Penang to support BN.

"To our disappointment, that position was snatched from us and given to (MIC in) another state," he said.

Henry said he was not ashamed nor afraid to admit that MIC, a party with a rich and long history of representing the Indian community, had lost support and standing.

He also did not mince his words when he said in his speech that the party needed a new president.

"I strongly feel that the time has come for our deputy president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam to take over the party leadership, give us a new drive and vision, and take us to the next level.

"All the recent developments in the party has reinforced growing calls among leaders and branch chairmen that the time has come for MIC to undergo a leadership change and transformation to revitalise and re-energise the party."

Henry said the change in leadership needed to happen as soon as possible as all BN

component parties prepare for the 14th general election, which is expected to be a tougher fight than last year.

Subramaniam, who was invited as the guest of honour for the event was unable to attend.

Party vice-president Datuk M. Saravanan, who was present, said the grouses and issues raised by Henry would be brought to the party leadership's attention for further action.

"I am here as Subramaniam's representative. All I can say is the party leadership will be notified," he said.

Saravanan praised Henry and another CWC member from Penang, J. Dhinakaran, for organising the open house and urged them to continue with preparations for the next general election. – November 2, 2014

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