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MIC WANTS A SECOND MEMBER IN THE CABINET

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- The MIC wants a second member in the Cabinet and for this reason is willing to give up the posts of deputy minister and two parliamentary secretaries, its president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said today.

Samy Velu, who is the sole MIC representative in the Cabinet, said the party was not satisfied with its current composition in the Cabinet.

"I have forwarded this proposal but there has been no favourable reply," he told a news conference after the opening of the 43rd MIC general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

The two-day conference was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Samy Vellu said it was the Prime Minister's prerogative to decide on the appointment of Cabinet ministers.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir in his speech said that although there was only one minister from the Indian community in the Cabinet, his contributions were invaluable and not confined to his ministry.

The MIC currently has one Cabinet minister (Works Ministry), two deputy ministers (Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry and Rural Development Ministry) and two parliamentary secretaries (Health Ministry and National Unity and Social Development Ministry).

On the Indian Progressive Front's (IPF) bid to join the Barisan Nasional (BN), Samy Vellu said the MIC would oppose any move by other Indian-based political parties to join the coalition.

He said only the MIC could "champion the cause of Indians in this country and had proven it in its struggle for the past 50 years."

"The Indians made up only 10 per cent of the total population. We only can have one party to represent the Indians," he said.

He said the IPF president Senator M.G.Pandhithan was not interested in joining the MIC but instead wanted the MIC to support his party's entry into the BN.

Samy Vellu also said the MIC had set up 80 branches to cater for former IPF members and another 48 would be registered soon.

He said the party would set up another 895 branches by Aug 31, bringing the total number of branches to 3,395.

The MIC president said he agreed with Dr Mahathir that the Indian community had benefited much from the country's rapid economic development.

However, he said only a handful of rich Indian individuals were in control of the community's share.

"Our worry is that the ordinary Indians have been left out. They need special programmes such as special allocation of shares," he added.

--BERNAMA.

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