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IPF-Dissolve

PANDITHAN DISMISSES TALK OF IPF-PPP MERGER

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Indian Progressive Front (IPF) president M.G.Pandithan today dismissed talk of a merger between his party and the People's Progressive Party (PPP), saying the IPF will not be dissolved and vowed to get the party into Barisan Nasional (BN) "at any cost".

His statement drew loud applause of "long live IPF, long live BN" from the 2,000 delegates at the 5th IPF general assembly here.

The one-day meeting was opened by Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Zahid, in his speech, said he was amazed by the strength of IPF and "did not see any reason why BN should not accept IPF into its fold", adding that Umno Youth was "open" on the matter.

The Umno Youth leader said he would propose to Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to review the coalition's system of decision-making through consensus, which he said gave component parties a veto power.

He said any party which now seeks to join the BN, like the IPF, must have the unanimous approval of all BN parties.

MIC has objected to IPF's entry into the coalition.

Pandithan told the delegates that "at any cost, the IPF will never be dissolved".

"Asking to dissolve IPF is like asking me to kill my child...I'd rather die than kill the IPF," he said.

Pandithan was reacting to a statement by PPP president Datuk M.Kayveas who last Wednesday said the PPP was prepared to absorb IPF and its estimated 500,000 members into the party.

Kayveas said the leaders of the two parties began negotiations on the matter several months ago and agreed to work closely together.

However, Pandithan expressed shock over the statement and denied there was any negotiation, saying "PPP leaders (not Kayveas) only spoke to me casually about the matter".

Speaking to reporters, Pandithan claimed that what he told the PPP leaders was that "IPF is willing to cooperate with PPP and the question of dissolving IPF did not arise at all".

"I am prepared to meet Kayveas but we are not prepared to dissolve IPF at any time," he said, adding that IPF "does not belong to Pandithan but to 500,000 members".

Zahid told reporters who asked him if Umno Youth was endorsing IPF's entry into the BN based on his speech earlier that the movement was "indebted" to IPF for its role in the 1995 generation election.

"Umno Youth cannot confirm or endorse...but we are open and that is stronger than an endorsement or support," he said.

When told that the MIC might not be pleased with his statement, Zahid said: "We have to accept reality. Leaders come and go but the struggle of the community has to go on."

He said he hoped "one day (MIC president) Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu will soften his stand and accept IPF". -- BERNAMA

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