

07 MAY 1999

Samy-Mahathir

M'SIA NEEDS DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP IN 21ST CENTURY - SAMY VELLU

KANGAR, May 7 (Bernama) -- MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today Malaysia needed the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the 21st century.

He said the question of Dr Mahathir handing over his post to his successor should not be raised as majority of Malaysians still supported Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir is a great leader of the 20th century and he is still capable of leading the country to the 21st century, he told reporters after opening the Perlis MIC convention, here.

" I'm making an open appeal not to raise the issue of Dr Mahathir stepping down as Prime Minister," said Samy Vellu, who is Works Minister.

Yesterday, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz appealed to Dr Mahathir not to talk about resigning.

Samy Vellu said only about 1,000 people were involved in anti-government activities while the vast majority of Malaysia's 21 million population still wanted Barisan Nasional (BN) to remain in power.

He said a few Indians who took part in the street demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur last month were not MIC members.

"We believe they were paid to demonstrate," he said.

He assured the government and the BN that the Indians would not revolt against the ruling coalition in the coming general election as they depended on the BN government to fulfil their needs.

Samy Vellu said the prevailing unity and harmony among the Malays, Chinese and Indians under the BN government had guaranteed political stability and enabled the country to progress to greater heights.

Hence, there was no reason for the people to change the government, he said.

On MIC's preparations for the general election, he said the party had started preparing for the polls by organising seminars for party members at divisional level and assisting in the ongoing voter registration exercise.

In his speech, Samy Vellu said Malaysian Indians had attained significant changes economically, politically and socially but there were still room for improvement.

According to the Mid-Term Review of the Seventh Malaysia Plan Report, the household income of Indians in 1996 and 1997 increased by 16.3 per cent as compared to the previous five-year development plan.

It surpassed the 12.7 per cent by Bumiputeras and 13.7 per cent by the Chinese in the two years, he said.

According to the report, the average household income of Indians rose to RM2,896 from RM2,140, proving that the standard of living of Indians have improved considerably under the BN government, he added.

-- BERNAMA

AD TS