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MIC-Image (News Focus)

MIC TO FORGE A NEW IMAGE FOR INDIANS

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 (Bernama) -- In a move to shed the century-long and infamous "working class" image of the Indian community, the 53rd MIC general assembly on Saturday will push for change to create a new image reflecting the community's progress in all fields.

MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said today the time has come for the Indians to be categorised as an intellectual and skilled workforce.

He said with the new millennium approaching, the Indian community must not carry the "colonial image" into the 21st century.

"There must be a drastic change within the Indian community, a change that will reflect the present situation and the needs of the new millennium," he said in an interview ahead of the two-day assembly.

A total of 5,300 delegates and observers are expected to attend the assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here, making it the largest assembly in MIC's history.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the assembly. This year's assembly would also be attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Samy Vellu, who is Works Minister, said to create the new image, educational opportunities would have to be intensified.

He said the MIC would request from the government more opportunities, including more study loans, for the Indians in local universities.

"Education is the key to the future. We will continue to emphasise this," he said.

Samy Vellu said the MIC would ask the government to approve the party's proposal to set up a medical university.

The MIC chief is also expected to explain to the 1,300 delegates about recent developments involving the community, including the dissolution of the South Indian Labour Fund.

MIC insiders said the assembly would try to peel back the many issues to identify the core issues confronting the Indian community in a move to rejuvenate the party.

To ensure that the party remained relevant, they said Samy Vellu is expected to direct the delegates' attention to the real issues, not those made up by the opposition.

According to them, Samy Vellu would identify the problems and possible solutions to the issues and elicit reaction from the delegates.

Meanwhile, MIC secretary-general Tan Sri K.S.Nijhar said the assembly would approve amendments to the MIC constitution empowering the president to appoint additional members to the Central Working Committee, the party's highest decision-making body.

The amendments would also increase the number of Youth and Wanita representatives to future MIC general assemblies from 10 to 35.

-- BERNAMA

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