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Samy Vellu-MIC

SAMY VELLU URGES INDIAN COMMUNITY TO SHED LABOURER IMAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30 (Bernama) -- MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu today urged Malaysian Indians to shed the labourer image which had dogged the community for more than a century and to create a new image in the coming cyber century which is full of challenges.

He said the nation and the Indian community were moving forward to face a more challenging century where competitiveness would be a crucial pre-condition for progress.

Samy Vellu, who is also Works Minister, said although participation of the Indian community in commercial and professional sectors could not be disputed, their image had always been linked to the labourers' class.

"I hope as MIC leaders, you will endeavour to change the image of the Indian community. It is our responsibility to change this image to that of a skilled community capable of meeting the challenges of the new century," he said in his policy speech at the 53rd MIC general assembly at the Dewan Merdeka, Putra World Trade Centre, here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad opened the two-day assembly attended by 1,500 delegates and more than 5,000 observers, which is the largest turnout in the history of the party established in 1946.

Samy Vellu said the labourer image had been based on several factors including the economic condition, social environment, educational opportunities and poor basic amenities.

"However, during the past two decades the transformation of the mind of the Indian community was more apparent and a change in attitude emerged. They struggled for equal opportunities. They are prepared to face the challenges of Vision 2020 by improving their educational status," he said.

Samy Vellu said they realised that education was an important factor in achieving rapid development for the coming century.

He said the MIC would continue to lay emphasis on the issue of the lack of places at local public universities and Indian students had to look for places in private institutions which cost more.

In his speech which lasted more than 40 minutes, Samy Vellu who has led the MIC since 1979, also touched on the plight of estate workers, issues on housing, the abolition of the South Indian Labourers' Fund, current economic situation and the party's organisation.

On the SILF which created controversy recently, he said the fund had failed to carry out its responsibilities and in fact was incapable of managing the Old Folks Home in Nibong Tebal which was under its care.

"But the Indian community appreciates the objectives and noble intention of the government and the prime minister's assurance that the welfare and needs of the Indian community would continue to be looked after," he said.

On the party's structure, he said the present MIC differed vastly from what it was 20 years ago and the party now had an effective network through 4,084 branches with 510,500 members to fulfil the aspirations of the Indian community.

On the issue of monthly wages for estate workers, Samy Vellu said the party's position was not confined only to the monthly salary but a review of a total package which included monthly wage structure, housing, basic amenities, quality of life and educational opportunities for their children.

"The MIC also feels that the question of monthly salary is not just a

matter between estate workers and estate owners. This subject has wide ranging ramifications. It has to be addressed from a national perspective with 2020 Vision in mind," he said.

Touching on Dr Mahathir's leadership, Samy Vellu said that under 18 years of his dynamic leadership, the Prime Minister had brought dignity and fame to make Malaysia a proud land of achievers and succeeded in making the country a striking example of a newly industrialised nation.

"You have always placed the nation above yourself. Your record of achievements is unparalleled. Let me assure you that you are not alone in your struggle to reform this nation. The MIC and its members will solidly rally behind you," he assured Dr Mahathir.

Samy Vellu also warned the people that the process of nation building would come to a halt if opposition parties, which he said was lacking in vision for development and had conflicting principles, were voted into power.

"Since Independence, Malaysian Indians have never deviated from giving their support to the Alliance government and then the Barisan Nasional government. It is needless for me to say Sir, that the India community will sink or swim with you," he added.

-- BERNAMA

RV AO