

# BN leaders laud MIC offer to Pandithan, followers

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional leaders have lauded the MIC's unconditional offer to Indian Progressive Front (IPF) president Datuk M.G. Pandithan and his followers to join the party for the sake of Malaysian Indian unity.

Barisan president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad welcomed the move as one which would help to unite the Indians in Malaysia.

"If IPF wants to join the MIC, it will make things easier for us (Bari-

*STAR 26-1-2001*  
san Nasional)," he said.

The Prime Minister said the IPF had, for a long time, asked to be in the Barisan and it had shown its support during elections.

However, he said the Barisan could not accept the IPF because there has to be consent from all component members of the coalition.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said if the offer was accepted by Pandithan and his followers, it would ease efforts to improve the socio-economic standing of the Indians.

He said the move would also reduce quarrels among parties of one race, adding that if all major races could be united, solidarity among the races could be further enhanced.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik also lauded MIC's offer, especially as IPF had been a very strong supporter of Barisan.

"Pandithan should consider this offer very seriously for the good of the Indians in this country," he said.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik also urged Pandithan to consider the offer in the interest of

all Indians and also the Barisan.

He said Pandithan and his followers could contribute more to Barisan by joining a component party.

On his part, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu indicated that Pandithan would be "given" a post if he were to accept the offer.

"I do not expect him to just come in as an ordinary member. I can't ask anybody to resign now, but definitely if he comes in I'll find something for him.

"There's no difficulty in that because as the president I have the

power to appoint anybody to the central working committee (CWC)," he said.

He said with or without a post, Pandithan still commanded respect among many MIC members.

"I've known him for 35 years. In politics, he was an ardent supporter of mine and we have shared good as well as bad times. If he accepts, we (MIC) will thank him. It's up to him," Samy Vellu added.

■ Pandithan will decide soon -P9