

Samy has unity in mind, says Dr M

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If Pandithan accepts offer it will reduce friction among Indians

ALOR STAR, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's willingness to accept Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan into MIC will help Indian unity.

He said the Barisan Nasional also welcomes all IPF members if they want to join MIC, thus making them members of the BN as well.

"IPF applied to join BN and has shown its support in elections, but we could not accept it as all BN members must accept a new party into the coalition," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also described the invitation to Pandithan and IPF members as "good for national solidarity."

Mahathir told reporters after attending a Hari Raya gathering organised by Kubang Pasu Umno in Jitra that if the IPF members join MIC then they will easily be accepted in BN, thus uniting both the Indian parties.

Abdullah, who was speaking to reporters at the Gerakan's Chinese New Year open house in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said efforts by any race to enhance the already

close ties among the races will boost national unity.

He added: "If Pandithan accepts the offer, it will reduce the friction among parties representing the same race. It is now up to him to accept the invitation."

In his speech earlier, Mahathir said Umno's decision to have a *muzakarah* (meeting) with PAS does not mean that the Malays oppose other races but it is a path to uniting all Malaysians.

"We will hear their opinions and they will listen to ours, but we cannot say anything at the moment since we are identifying the place and date for the event," he said.

In **PETALING JAYA** today, an aide to Pandithan said he gathering feedback from members around the country on the MIC offer.

Pandithan met members in Kedah and Penang during the Chinese New Year holidays and will return to Kuala Lumpur today before heading south tomorrow.

"This is an important issue and he is getting feedback from all our members throughout the country before making an announcement next week," the aide said.