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Dr M to open event expected to draw 1,500 delegates

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JOHOR BARU, Fri. - About 1,500 MIC delegates, including 35 representatives each from the Youth and Wanita movements, will be attending the two-day 55th MIC general assembly at the Eden Garden Hotel here tomorrow.

It is scheduled to be opened by Barisan Nasional chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed.

MIC secretary-general S. Sothinathan told The New Straits Times that this was the second time in the party's 55-year history that it organised the general assembly outside Kuala Lumpur.

He said it was held in Penang in the early Eighties.

"Our intention is to give Johor MIC members a chance to organise such a big function like this. It will also be good exposure for them and a valuable experience.

"We are fully mobilising the Johor MIC. They have set up several sub-committees to finalise preparations. Members in the committee include State leaders, division and branch members as well as representatives from the Youth and Wanita movements."

Sothinathan, who is also the Health Ministry's Parliamentary Secretary, added the MIC had extended invitations to other BN component party leaders to attend the function.

"Most of them have indicated that they would be present. Among guests will be Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman."

The party had booked nearly 800 rooms in six hotels for delegates attending the assembly.

The hotels are Eden Garden Hotel, Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Grand Continental Hotel, Crystal Crown Hotel and Crown Plaza Hotel.

Sothinathan added that members would be arriving here today for the assembly and return home on Sunday.

The agenda for tomorrow includes opening address by party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, opening speech by Dr Mahathir, the tabling of annual reports by the secretary and the treasurer followed by debate on the president's speech.

For Sunday, delegates will continue with debate on the president's speech, debate on the resolutions, constitutional amendment and winding up speech by party leaders and Samy Vellu.

Sothinathan said the assembly was expected to be an interesting one as the past year had been a challenging one for the party.

"We believe delegates will be in high spirits as there is so much to discuss. This includes the Outline Perspective Plan 3, Eighth Malaysia Plan and the incident in Taman Medan.

He added that the proposed changes to the party constitution, especially the election of national level Youth and Wanita heads and office bearers at the branch level, were also expected to be keenly discussed.

He said some surprises were also being planned but declined to elaborate.

Meanwhile, Johor MIC liaison Committee chairman Datuk K.S. Balakrishnan said some 5,000 party members, including from its Youth and Wanita wings from here, are expected to gather at the hotel to welcome Dr Mahathir.

"We are very excited about the assembly as it is being held in Johor for the first time. It is indeed an honour for us," said Balakrishnan.