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IPF-Proposal

IPF WANTS CONCRETE PROPOSAL FROM MIC

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 27 (Bernama) -- The All-Malaysian Indian Progressive Front (IPF), breaking a three-day silence today on the MIC's invitation to come into its fold, said the party wants the MIC to furnish it with concrete proposals on how its members are to be absorbed into the MIC.

"We have not got a formal written invitation from the MIC. We also want to know how, if we decide to join the MIC, IPF members will be absorbed...we need more details including the party's constitution," IPF president Datuk M.G. Pandithan told a news conference, here.

The party hoped that the MIC, the largest Indian-based party in the country, would furnish details of this proposed exercise before the IPF central working committee joint council meeting next Sunday for the party's top leadership to discuss the matter thoroughly.

He said only after a concrete proposal had been submitted can the party leadership study the implications of joining the MIC and explain the matter to its members on the pros and cons of taking up the MIC offer.

"I want to know what will happen to my half-a-million members...this must be made clear as we have some 1,800 branches and 100 divisions. Furthermore, we need the MIC constitution to see if expelled members can come back into the party and the restrictions placed on them if they do so," he said.

On Tuesday, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, after the party's central working committee meeting, invited the IPF and Pandithan to rejoin the MIC.

This olive branch extended by Samy Vellu drew positive reaction from almost all Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who want the IPF to seriously consider the offer.

Immediately after the invitation was made, Pandithan, when contacted, asked for more time and said he would seek consensus from his members before making a decision.

Pandithan, a former MIC vice president, was expelled from the MIC as he was said to be acting against the interest of the party, in 1988. He went on to form the IPF.

Today, asked if he had discussed the matter with his members, Pandithan said so far he had yet to discuss the issue as he had been busy preparing for the IPF's ninth general assembly, expected to be opened by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, on Feb 11.

"I want to finish the assembly first and get the consensus of IPF members if they want to join MIC," he said. The consensus would be in the form of a secret ballot, said Pandithan.

Questioned what will happen if there is a split among IPF members on the issue, he said the voice of the majority would be followed.

Asked if he would personally take up the MIC's offer, he said it was not a question of him taking up a position in the MIC leadership but more to the wishes of IPF members.

"My position, if IPF joins the MIC, is not big. The position of state, division and branch leaders of the party is the point in contention...what will be the fate of my members.

"My love for them (IPF members) is greater than anything else and I cannot abandon them just like that...I have to put them in a safe position first," he said.

He also said whatever his decision on the matter, he would not thrust

it on his members but they would be allowed to make the decision on their own.

He said he had not spoken to Samy Vellu, who is Works Minister, after the offer was made but was willing to have a round-table discussion with MIC leaders on the matter.

Asked if he had expected the invitation, Pandithan said he was shocked and perplexed over the gesture "although it came a bit too late but it is a good move and we thank Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu for the invitation".

In an immediate reaction, MIC secretary-general S. Sothinathan said the proposal asked by IPF would be discussed by party leaders soon. Samy Vellu is away to India and is only expected to return late tonight.

However, Sothinathan said Pandithan and IPF members should first become MIC members before asking for any privileges in the party.

"The president (Samy Vellu) has already indicated that Pandithan will be given a position on the MIC central working committee and if he comes, surely he will have a seat and we are not going to neglect IPF members," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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