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MIC chief tells of smear campaign

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu today revealed that "certain quarters" had launched a campaign against him alleging that the party had done nothing to assist plantation workers.

He said when he was in Kedah yesterday, he was presented with the latest copy of the monthly Aliran magazine which contained several articles hurling unsubstantiated accusations against the MIC.

"These articles were written by a man `who does not know what is happening in the country'", he said after presenting RM210,000 in cash and medicines to the MIC Gujarat Earthquake Fund at his office.

He said the articles also alleged that Indians in the country "were at this stage" because of the MIC and that since plantation workers came to Malaysia 150 years ago until today, the MIC had done nothing to assist them.

"Aliran is just a one-sided magazine which never propagates the truth. I really don't care about this new campaign.

"For me, I represent the Indians and over the years have done all I can to help them."

He said he had raised the issue of monthly wages for plantation workers at Cabinet meetings on several occasions.

"It is not easy to come to a conclusion soon. There are lots of factors to be considered which take time."

Earlier this month, the Malaysian Agricultural Producers Association and the National Union of Plantation Workers had agreed to a minimum monthly wage of RM325 for workers in oil palm plantations.

Under the three-year agreement, effective Jan 1, fruit pluckers and those working in the palm oil mills would receive a minimum wage irrespective of whether they work a full month or less.

Together with an increase in the existing allowances given, these workers are expected to earn a total monthly wage of between RM700 and RM1,200.

On the issue of monthly wages for rubber tappers, Samy Vellu said he had raised the matter with Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn who had informed him that part of the problem had already been resolved.

He said since the RM325 benchmark monthly wage for palm oil workers had been set, Fong had told him that he had already asked Mapa and NUPW to speed up their negotiations on monthly wages for rubber tappers.

"However, the people must understand that this would take some time and cannot be settled in a few days."

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had asked Fong for a report on the matter and he (Fong) had set up a special committee to do this.

Meanwhile, he said several disgruntled parents of pupils of SRJK (C) Damansara had met him at his office last week to voice their dissatisfactions over having to move to the new school.

He said he would bring up the matter to the Cabinet.

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