

12 FEB 2001

Pandithan-Drama

PANDITHAN REJECTS CLAIM IPF BALLOT A DRAMA

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Indian Progressive Front (IPF) president Datuk M.G. Pandithan said it was "hurtful" that the party's voting yesterday to decide its future had been construed as a drama.

"This is not a drama ... why question the integrity and political wisdom of the delegates?" he said in reference to a statement by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu on the outcome of the ballot.

Calling the results "a drama staged" by Pandithan, Samy Vellu reportedly said he was not surprised at the IPF decision not to take up his offer for them to join the MIC.

The 2,950 IPF delegates overwhelmingly voted to reject the offer from both the MIC and the People's Progressive Party (PPP). MIC and PPP are Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties.

Pandithan said he let delegates decide on IPF's future as he wanted to "feel their pulse".

"I can make the decision but I fear that it may be wrong ... the delegates democratically did it," he told Bernama today.

He rejected suggestions that the results had been orchestrated, saying that he could not have convinced all the delegates.

Pandithan himself abstained from voting.

Only two delegates felt the party should have taken up the offer, one for MIC and the other for PPP.

"I can also say that Samy Vellu's offer to me to rejoin the MIC is a political stunt but I had respected his invitation ..."

"At the same time I wanted to know what my party members think, whether they want me to lead," he said.

Asked if IPF's chances to join the BN was as good as gone, Pandithan said he did not think so.

"Going to MIC is closed but going to BN is not," he said.

Pandithan said he would write to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the BN chairman, to explain about yesterday's IPF general assembly and the mandate to continue its struggle to become a BN component party.

-- BERNAMA

AZZ MAM THG