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Samy-Pandithan

PANDITHAN MAY GET MIC POST UPON RE-JOINING PARTY, SAMY VELLU INDICATES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 24 (Bernama) -- MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu has indicated that Indian Progressive Front (IPF) president Datuk M.G. Pandithan will be given a post upon rejoining the MIC.

"Usually all the positions are filled...but when he (Pandithan) comes in I will find something for him," said Samy Vellu.

Since he has presidential powers to appoint "anyone to the party's central working committee," Samy Vellu said it was not difficult to find "some" position for Pandithan in the MIC.

"There is no difference, obviously when he comes in I won't ask him to be an ordinary member," he told reporters at the MCA Chinese New Year open house at Wisma MCA, here, today.

The Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, cabinet ministers and diplomats were among the 5,000 people present.

Pandithan left the MIC more than a decade ago after a squabble with Samy and formed the IPF with a claimed membership of 200,000.

The IPF teamed up with the now defunct Semangat 46 for the 1990 general election but following Semangat's dissolution in the early 1990s, it endeared itself to the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the 1995 and 1999 general elections.

Despite repeated applications to join the ruling coalition, the consensus system in the BN prevented the IPF move from materialising.

On whether the MIC would amend its constitution to allow Pandithan to contest for party posts sooner than the minimum five years of membership, Samy Vellu said the MIC central working committee and party members would decide on this.

The MIC constitution states that a member must be in the party for least five years before he or she is allowed to stand for posts in party polls. The next MIC elections are slated for 2003.

The MIC appoints its treasurer-general, secretary-general and five central working committee members.

Tan Sri M. Mahalingam is currently party treasurer-general while Health Ministry Parliamentary Secretary S. Sothinathan, is secretary-general.

Samy Vellu still can fit Pandithan in the party central working committee as there are still two vacant slots.

"Appointment to a certain position will be decided later with the endorsement of the grass root members...and MIC members will be quite happy if Pandithan comes back to the MIC's fold...it will be a reunion of old friends," Samy Vellu said.

Yesterday, when reacting to the olive branch extended by the MIC, Pandithan said he needed time to think and would discuss with IPF members before deciding on the next course of action.

The IPF will hold a secret ballot next month to let its members decide whether to remain in the party or join other BN component parties.

Samy Vellu has assured Pandithan that should he decide to return to the MIC he would get the respect and "everything he deserves."

"I know him for 35 years...in politics he was an ardent supporter of mine and we have shared good as well as bad times...if he accepts we (MIC) will thank him, it's up to him," Samy Vellu added.

Meanwhile MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) should seriously consider joining MIC for the sake

of Indians in the country.

"Pandithan was from the MIC and for whatever reason I don't remember he left the party...now he has been invited to rejoin the party which is an opportunity for all Indians in Malaysia to unite," Dr Ling told reporters at the MCA Chinese New Year open house here, today.

He said the MIC's move to invite the IPF to rejoin the party was a good one and should be viewed positively.

Asked if there could be any other motive behind the invitation, Dr Ling said, "I don't see any other reason for the invitation except to unite Indians in the country."

On the MCA open house held at Wisma MCA, attended by some 5,000 people, Dr Ling said he was happy with the turnout which included people of various races and foreign tourists.

"This is a good tradition and we should maintain it to create a truly Bangsa Malaysia," he added.

Meanwhile Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding also welcomed the offer by MIC to Pandithan and his party members, saying it would enable IPF members to join BN.

"I think it's a good move. BN always welcomes people who share similar ideas to join it," he said.

The MCA open house was also attended by the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, several cabinet ministers and members of the diplomatic corps.

On the absence of Dr Mahathir at the MCA open house, Dr Ling said the Prime Minister was sick and his doctors had advised him to rest.

He said he spoke to Dr Mahathir on Monday when the Prime Minister informed him that he was not feeling well and that his doctors had ordered him to take a rest.

"He (Dr Mahathir) is very hardworking but he needs to rest...even the best machines need to be serviced and maintained...and I told him, please have a good rest sir," he said.

The Prime Minister also skipped the Gerakan open house which he was also scheduled to attend.

Dr Mahathir, however, joined the Chinese New Year celebrations by attending a luncheon hosted by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Heing Ding at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel here.

On arrival at the hotel at noon, the Prime Minister was greeted by a lion dance troupe.

Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datin Seri Endon Mahmood and several Cabinet Ministers were among some 120 invited guests who attended the new year luncheon.

The Prime Minister, who spent more than two hours at the luncheon left the function without speaking to the press.

-- BERNAMA

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