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MIC-Samy (Politics)

UNDERSTAND POLITICAL REALITIES, SAMY VELLU TELLS MIC MEMBERS

JOHOR BAHRU, May 19 (Bernama) -- MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu today called on party members to understand the country's political realities and warned that the politics of the future would be more demanding and challenging.

"The party must play a new role to initiate change in the Indian community," he said at the opening of the 55th MIC general assembly here.

The two-day assembly was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is also the Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman.

Samy Vellu said the rise of the middle class and their demand for greater democratic space had new implications for politics today whereby civil society movements such as non-governmental organisations and grass-root citizen groups were challenging traditional politics in voicing the concerns of the neglected sections of the community.

"One of the greatest challenge facing the MIC is capacity-building within the community through self-help and self-reliance programmes.

"We have to think in terms of action-oriented activities that will satisfy the needs of the Indian community and ensure their advancement in the society," he said.

He said MIC leaders should be fully aware that "it is not what we do once that counts but our consistent actions."

"We must understand the political realities that prevail around us and never lose sight of our duty and responsibility to the community and the nation.

"We have to create the essence and power in pathfinding by creating a mission and vision for the next 10 years. We have to deal with the future and foster a culture among leaders that is exciting," he said.

The MIC, he said, had consistently broadened its political base over the last two decades from 240,000 members in 1984 to 548,000 members in 2000, representing a 163 per cent growth. The total number of branches had also seen an increase from 700 to 4,300 for the same period.

This year, the party had embarked on a new exercise to further increase its membership with the opening up of another 1,100 new branches and with this, the total membership of the party would reach 650,000 members.

Samy Vellu said political representation and initiating self-help measures were two important roles of the MIC.

"In championing the legitimate rights of Malaysian Indians, the party has to consider the aspirations of other communities, the common interest and advancement of the nation as a whole," he said, adding that the MIC's quest for progress was not in isolation but a collective and collaborative attempt in creating a better place for all Malaysians.

On education, he said the party placed great importance on education as a vehicle for social and economic progress of the community and to achieve this the party established Tafe college which had so far enabled over 16,000 young Malaysians of all races to become professionals and para professionals.

The Maju Institute of Educational Development, Samy Vellu said, was set up to provide educational sponsorship and loans for needy students from all communities and had to date extended loans to more than 8,000 students to pursue their studies.

However, he said, the predicament of the Indian community was access to intellectually challenging courses where in the recent university intake

several parents had expressed their disappointment on the selection process for admission of courses.

"The MIC calls on the government to review the current system of university intake in order to ensure that more places are made available to cater for the higher educational needs of deserving students," he said.

On Tamil schools, he said 16 Tamil schools would be rebuilt within the next two years at a cost of RM13.9 million to provide better facilities for more than 6,000 children, mostly from the lower income group.

He said the MIC embarked on the setting up of the Asian Institute of Medical Science and Technology in Semiling, Kedah, after realising the educational challenges of the future.

Landscaping for the university began in March this year and by end of this month, the building of the campuses would start, he said, adding that the university would have four campuses -- Medicine, Science, Technology and Multimedia.

On poverty, Samy Vellu said that while the government was moving in every possible direction to eradicate poverty among the people, there were still pockets of poverty dominant within the Klang Valley.

"Every ordinary citizen desires peace, security, decent housing, nutrition, healthcare and a meaningful lifestyle. Unfortunately, such normal requirements of life are not achievable for a good section of the people," he added.

He said that while the MIC was happy with the 23,000 low-cost houses planned under the 8th Malaysia Plan, it felt that the federal government should build more houses on the fringes of smaller towns to provide better housing for rural residents, including estate workers.

He said the MIC was a party that did not only react to situations and circumstances when problems arose but adopted proactive and preventive measures in addressing the community's concerns.

The establishment of the Social Strategic Foundation, the social wing of the party, which has about 20 full-time staff, was evidence of this, he said.

"The MIC also takes a serious view of rising crime, violence and social disorders among the youth of the community and to combat this situation, we have organised an Anti-Violence Campaign nationwide to eliminate crime and violence from the society," he added.

He said the party had laid out a large network of programmes in line with the Social Management System (Pintas) and was working with organisations like the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation to reach its objective.

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