

Samy Vellu: Untimely move

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SHAH ALAM: The MIC appreciates that university admission be based on merit but feels the time is not right for its introduction.

Party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said yesterday that Malaysian Indian students would need more time to prepare themselves to meet these new challenges.

"We were shocked over the drastic reduction in the intake of Indian students into institutions of higher learning for the academic year 2002/2003, which dropped from eight percent to 4.7 percent.

"A total of 3,961 students with Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) qualification applied to join public universities, out of which 2,537 qualified for entry but only 1,530 students were given places," he said in his policy speech at the 56th MIC general assembly.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad opened the assembly, attended by over 1,460 delegates and a few hundred observers at Dewan Jubli Perak in Shah Alam.

Samy Vellu said the reduced intake had put the Indian community in great dilemma as they felt that their children would face a bleak future.

"When the matter was publicised, there were thousands of inquiries from the Indian community and my only answer to them was 'hold on, the matter will be left in the good hands of the Prime Minister'," he said.

"They are asking 'what will we do

when you are no longer there'," he said, to cheers from the delegates.

Samy Vellu described the issue as one of two that continue to "plague" the Indian community.

The other issue was the plight of the estate workers, which he said, remained unchanged, with their low income, poor living environment, dilapidated housing and poor facilities.

"It is almost two years now since the issue of monthly wages for rubber estate workers was raised and until today, it has not been resolved. The discussions between the National Union of Plantation Workers and Malaysian Agricultural Producers Association had failed to decide on a basic monthly wage for them," he said, adding that the Government should intervene and bring about a speedy solution to the problem.

Samy Vellu heaped praise on Dr Mahathir who has just returned from a historic meeting with US President George W. Bush and senior members of his administration in Washington.

He also said there has been marked improvement in Tamil school education in recent years with better results in Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR).

Samy Vellu said there was also a need for an organised efforts to look into the plight of the "new urban poor" and called for a special unit in the Prime Minister's Department to look into the issues.