

# IPF to stress on patience

(STAR) 17 NOV 2002

## Pandithan to reassure members during assembly

■ By A. LETCHUMANAN

PETALING JAYA: The Indian Progressive Front (IPF) will stress on the need to be patient among its members when they meet at the 11th annual general assembly to be held at the Putra World Trade Centre on Nov 24.

Party president Datuk M.G. Pandithan said this was necessary as the members were agitated and worried that their efforts and sacrifices for Barisan Nasional over the last 12 years would go unrecognised.

"I will stress (to members) that IPF is a respected party in the eyes of all the component parties in Barisan except for one party. We will continue with our struggle as our agenda to uplift the plight of the down-

trodden community is unfinished.

"I had also asked the members to have full confidence in Barisan leadership. They won't let us down," he said.

Pandithan said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has consented to open the assembly, to be attended by over 5,000 delegates, observers and invited guests, for the second consecutive year.

"We hope Abdullah can give some words of encouragement to our members who have been knocking on the Barisan door for a long time," he said.

It is believed that preparations were under way for an elaborate welcoming ceremony for Abdullah, similar to that of

last year when garlands were brought down by a pulley before Pandithan garlanded the Deputy Prime Minister to a shower of flower petals.

Pandithan rose to become the vice-president of MIC and Trade and Industry Ministry parliamentary secretary in the 1980s but his political fortunes took a drastic turn when he was expelled from the party for staging a hunger strike with a coffin in 1989.

He formed IPF and threw its support behind the opposition in the 1990 general elections before doing an about-turn a year later and pledged support to Barisan. Since then, it had unsuccessfully applied to join Barisan several times.

Pandithan said several reso-

lutions to resolve the economic, education, political and labour problems faced by the community would be tabled at the assembly.

"We will also pledge our loyalty to Barisan and the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Abdullah," he said.

One of the resolutions was to urge the government to speed up the processing of applications for foreign workers from India as several of the Indian small businesses were in dire straits due to labour shortage.

Another resolution was to urge the Government to provide free education for all children until tertiary education, as practised in some countries.