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Put a stop to loan shark activities, MIC urges Government

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The MIC today urged the Government to take immediate action to stop illegal money-lending activities in the country.

Its president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said loan sharking had become rampant and illegal money lenders were now so brave that they had little regard for the law.

"Something must be done immediately. Their operations are expanding rapidly and they mainly prey on the lower-income group," he said after chairing the party's central working committee today.

Samy Vellu was commenting on a report today that a young couple and their four-year-old son died after consuming paraquat because the family was being harassed by loan sharks.

Businessman M. Manimaran, 35, and his wife Leela Vellu, 27, died at the Seremban Hospital yesterday while their son Devan Raja died on Wednesday night.

On another matter, Samy Vellu said the MIC had set up 600 new branches this year and would establish another 300 after the party's annual general assembly in May next year.

Three of the 600 branches were set up in Putrajaya. "There are between 105 and 110 members in each branch which adds up to about 63,000 new members this year," he said.

He said as of last year there were about 585,000 members in the MIC, while about 40,000 were struck off after failing to pay their annual subscriptions.

"Our recruitment drive has been very encouraging, with branches sometimes receiving five to 10 applications of new membership in a day," he said.

Samy Vellu said the party polls will be held on May 17 and 18 next year, subject to confirmation by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"All branches and divisions will hold their meetings on Feb 7, 8, 9 and March 7, 8, 9," he said, adding that the notice on the date of nominations for the presidential election will be sent three months before his tenure ends on May 27, 2003.

He also said RM500 would be given to each of the 198 pupils from Tamil schools nationwide who scored 7As in their Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah examinations.