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IPF getting tired of waiting for Samy Vellu to allow it to join BN

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HAVING been staunch supporters of the Barisan Nasional for more than 10 years, IPF president Datuk M.G. Pandithan believes it is time the IPF and other like-minded parties were admitted into the coalition.

"If the decision not to admit us was an unanimous one, then I am prepared to accept it and advise my members to decide their own political future.

"But, if our entry into the BN is being prevented by just one man, then I feel it is grossly unfair and that we should be given a chance to prove our strength," he said.

He said this unfair manner in determining the admission of smaller pro-BN parties defeated the very concept of unity and fairness which the coalition preached and had stood for over the years.

Pandithan said accusations of him spreading caste politics were totally baseless and the IPF's sole aim was to reach out to the poor and down-trodden.

"They (poor) know the IPF is the only political party which understands their situation and is capable of caring for their future." The party, he added, was made up of Indians from various castes.

The former MIC vice-president said he believed the IPF would be a major asset to the BN as it was a working class party and had played crucial roles in delivering the votes in two general elections and numerous byelections.

"Even if the IPF and other smaller pro-BN parties are not accepted as full-fledged members, we feel it is time the BN at least admits us as associate members," he said.

Pandithan was expelled as MIC vice-president on July 16, 1988, when he allegedly brought a coffin to the party headquarters after he learnt he was to be sacked for indiscipline. He formed IPF shortly after.

After tirelessly working for the BN, he said the feeling of neglect was slowly creeping into the minds of party members.

"I have been giving them hope that one day the IPF will be admitted into the BN. But how long are we to wait? The majority of our members are below 45 years and have plenty to contribute," he said.

Pandithan said the Opposition was praying for the IPF and other smaller pro-BN parties to break up so they can woo these "lost" members into their fold.

"I doubt this will ever happen. We are all hardcore BN supporters. The only problem is that frustration is creeping in and we feel it is high time the BN made a decision on our future."

However, he said, despite facing so many setbacks, the IPF had grown in strength and he was confident there would be a drastic increase in membership if the party was admitted into the BN.

He said merging with the MIC was never an option as the members had clearly made their stand that they never want to become MIC members.

"Even after my expulsion from the MIC, (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tried his best to strike a compromise between (MIC president) Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and me," said Pandithan, who was at the time the Parliamentary Secretary to the then Trade and Industry Ministry.

However, he said Samy Vellu was adamant and did not want to compromise and he (Pandithan) was forced to leave.

"I decided to form the IPF due to overwhelming support and also because I was no longer wanted in the MIC," he said, adding there were over 380,000 members in IPF now.

"For now, I can say none of our members have given up hope, yet. But I do pray we can become part of the BN before the next general election."

He said a few hundred votes could be very crucial in determining the outcome of a general election and at the end of the day, the BN must realise that these smaller parties could make a big difference on which party gets to form the Government.

Pandithan said it was time for this "one man" to look at the bigger picture and move away from his obsolete and old-fashioned ideas.

"There is nowhere else for us to go. It is becoming more and more difficult to convince the members to continue our struggle.

"I sincerely appeal to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to give us, the smaller parties, a chance to prove ourselves, at least as associate members."

He said the admittance of IPF into the BN would never pose a threat to the MIC and in fact, it could actually complement the MIC in many ways.

He said the Indian community was still lacking in many things and even with two Indian-based parties in the BN, there would still be too much work to be done.

"I do not see why we cannot work together. Why does the MIC fear us so much? We are not hungry for power.

"All we want is a sense of belonging and a fair chance to prove what we are capable of and the difference we can make in assisting others."