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MIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FIXED FOR FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- The MIC will hold its presidential election in February next year, three months before the present term of Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu ends.

"We will open nominations for the president's post in early February and at the end of the month we will have the election, if there are any challengers," the MIC president said.

He said that the party would hold its annual general assembly in May next year and being a party election year, the assembly would be used to pick national level MIC leaders.

Branch and divisional elections would be held from early March to late April, he told reporters after receiving contributions for the party's Asian Institute of Medicine, Science and Technology at the Bukit Jalil Golf and Country Club here last night.

In May this year, the MIC, at its annual general assembly, amended its constitution to allow for the president's election be separated from the election of other top MIC office-bearers.

The amended party constitution also requires any contender to the president's throne to have at least 50 nominations before being eligible to contest. Each nomination must carry one proposer and five seconders and all of them are required to be branch chairman.

The contender must also be a branch chairman and a party member for at least 10 years.

Next year's presidential election will also see something new when a total of 4,500 branch chairmen (the total number of branches in the MIC) be given an opportunity to cast their ballots in picking the party's top leader.

It has been a norm in the party in the past for the president to be picked, in the event of a contest, by over 1,300 divisional delegates.

On another matter, Samy Vellu, who is also Works Minister, said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, at yesterday's cabinet meeting, had asked the Home Ministry to provide a detailed report on the death of a lorry driver while being detained at the Klang district police headquarters.

R. Sunder Raja, 34, died on Tuesday after being in a coma since last Friday. He was alleged to have been assaulted by nine cell-mates while in police custody.

He was arrested after his wife, M. Latha, lodged a report alleging that she was assaulted during an argument and that Sunder Raja had threatened to set her ablaze.

Following Sunder Raja's death, his family lodged a police report alleging foul play and their case has been taken up by the MIC Youth.

Yesterday, Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai visited the police headquarters and instructed a probe be conducted on the case.

"The death of Sunder Raja is still a mystery...the police should know what is going on in the cells. We want to know who is responsible for the death," Samy Vellu said.

Meanwhile, MIC Youth wants those suspected of the crime be charged and police should not use the Emergency Ordinance or Crime Prevention Ordinance to deal with suspects.

Its secretary, S.Murugesan, said in a statement issued here today that an independent investigation should be conducted into the incident as the

32-year-old victim died in police custody, as not to erode public confidence in the police force.

"The investigation must also look at the role of the warders and overcrowding in lock-ups. If lock-ups are overcrowded, then measures must be taken not to detain suspects longer than the time frame," he said.

The MIC Youth also welcomes the decision by Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai to instal closed circuit cameras in lock-ups.

-- BERNAMA

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