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Samy-Pandithan

SAMY VELLU WARNS PANDITHAN NOT TO PLAY WITH FIRE

SHAH ALAM, Nov 9 (Bernama) -- MIC President Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu today blew his top at the end of the party's Election Machinery Convention here, warning Indian Progressive Front (IPF) President Datuk M.G. Pandithan not to play with fire.

"All this while, I've been silent and patient with him and his comments. I wish to remind Pandithan to stop playing with fire or else you'll get burnt," he said in front of more than 8,500 MIC leaders at all levels who attended the one-day convention, here.

The Works Minister issued the warning in reacting to calls by delegates who called for stern action to be taken against Pandithan and a Tamil newspaper managing editor who had condemned Samy Vellu, asking him to step down as MIC President and make way for a younger leader.

Delegates had alleged that the daily was aiding Pandithan in calling for Samy Vellu's resignation.

They also alleged that the newspaper's editorials were slanted and questioned Samy Vellu's sincerity in assisting the Indian community as MIC President and Works Minister.

Samy Vellu and Pandithan have been engaged in a long-running battle ever since the latter formed IPF after being sacked from the MIC in 1988.

Last month, Pandithan called on Samy Vellu to step down following the call by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to veteran Barisan Nasional (BN) component party leaders to bow out when the time was right.

Pursuant to Dr Mahathir's statement, Pandithan and the Tamil daily had been hitting out at Samy Vellu but the MIC President had said that party members would have to decide when he should relinquish his post.

Party Vice-Presidents -- Datuk S. Veerasingham, Datuk G. Palanivel and Tan Sri K.S. Nijhar -- have come out in support of Samy Vellu to stay put in the party.

MIC Deputy President Datuk S. Subramaniam, however, had yet to openly pledge his support for Samy Vellu to continue.

"I'm not angry or upset over Subramaniam's statement over the past week. I've received about 3,000 short messaging service (SMS) asking me to carry on. I know I've the support. I need not worry about it," Samy Vellu said.

Samy Vellu said 56 MIC branches wanted to move a motion, calling on him to continue leading the party but "I set it aside."

He said he disallowed tabling of the motion as it would side-track the convention which was to prepare MIC leaders for the upcoming general election.

Earlier, the 4,300 branch chairmen passed two resolutions. One supporting the new leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the other thanking Dr Mahathir for his immense contributions to the country and people during his 22-year tenure as Prime Minister.

In a fiery winding-up speech, Samy Vellu said Pandithan had lied to palace officials to get an award for a Tamil newspaper managing editor.

I can prove that Pandithan lied to the palace...the managing editor can sue me but I have the proof. Pandithan should tell the truth now and not try to split MIC.

"What right has he got to ask me to resign. I'm an elected president of the MIC. I would have come out earlier to say this but I wanted to use this platform.

"I wanted all MIC leaders at all levels to be here before responding to Pandithan's statement," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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