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Call for Subramaniam to be promoted to full minister

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A NEW twist has been added to the controversy surrounding calls to MIC president Datuk S. Samy Vellu to step down with an Indian community leader hoping that party deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam will be promoted to full minister soon.

S. Ghanthinathan, the head of a welfare organisation dedicated to Indian nationalist Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, was quoted by Malaysia Nanban as saying that he hoped this would happen under the leadership of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He hoped the Deputy Prime Minister, who takes over from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday, will promote Subramaniam, who has been deputy minister for more than two decades. It quoted Ghanthinathan on Monday as saying that while the MIC under Samy Vellu had helped the organisation in many ways, the relationship between the two bodies could be further strengthened if Subramaniam was made a full minister.

The Tamil Nesan did not, however, publish the report, which contained questions which have been on the lips of many Indians for some time given the fact that Samy Vellu has been the only minister representing Indians since 1979.

For the record, there was a time in the 1980s when there were two Indian ministers in the Cabinet from the MIC. The party lost one of the minister's post when it agreed to an exchange for two deputy ministers' posts.

Both newspapers also failed to publish a Bernama report which appeared in the English Press yesterday on Subramaniam's silence over a statement by Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan that Samy Vellu should step down .

Malaysia Nanban has been publishing reports and editorials over the past week exhorting Samy Vellu to heed Dr Mahathir's call to veteran leaders to step down and allow others to take over. Tamil Nesan, on the other hand, has been supporting calls for the Works Minister to continue as MIC leader.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Nanban carried a report from Sitiawan yesterday, which stated that an Indian applicant for a shophouse developed by the Manjung District Council had been turned down ostensibly because his brother was a leader in an opposition party.

The newspaper stated that the rejection was made in a council meeting earlier this month where the representative "of a party representing Indians" had expressed reservations about selling a unit to the applicant because of this reason.

Some Indians in Manjung, it added, were unhappy that such reasons were being used to disqualify applicants for shophouses, which were meant for all, irrespective of political affiliation.