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Community must undergo revamp, says Samy Vellu

THE Malaysian Indian community must undergo total restructuring and re-orientation to meet the challenges of the 21st century, MIC party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said yesterday.

The new Malaysian Indian, he added, is self-sustaining, educated, competitive and capable of meeting the challenges ahead.

Samy Vellu, in his opening address at the party's 57th general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, called on Malaysian Indians to discard the image of being labourers and adopt one which reflects their self-worth and accomplishments.

He said the emergence of a new Malaysian Indian identity was imperative for the sustainability of the community in modern Malaysia.

Samy Vellu said in the last 20 years, the MIC had attempted to forge a strong and distinct identity. He said the MIC realised that only education could improve the socio-economic status of the community.

"For more than 150 years the Indian community has been known to be a class of labourers who earned meagre salaries, without suitable education and deemed to have no future.

"We have to change this image through organised efforts to provide the infrastructure for education for the lower-income group."

Samy Vellu said it was the responsibility of all leaders to work hard for the community and ensure the grassroots take advantage of the opportunities available.

Samy Vellu, who is the Works Minister, said Tamil language and Tamil schools were an important element in the Malaysian community.

"It is a heritage and culture which every Malaysian should be proud of.

Tamil schools should not only be maintained but improved through extra financial allocation."

Samy Vellu said according to a survey conducted by the MIC, Tamil schools have improved with changes to their infrastructure and the quality of education.

He said a National Action Council for Tamil Schools has been formed as part of the action plan to monitor the changes in Tamil schools.

Samy Vellu thanked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the allocations from the Prime Minister's special fund to upkeep and renovate Tamil schools.

Meanwhile, he urged Dr Mahathir to review the action plan which was supposed to have been undertaken by the Economic Planning Unit to increase the present 1.5 per cent equity ownership by Indians to three per cent by 2010.

"The mid-term review of the Eighth Malaysian Plan is due for tabling in Parliament later this year but no concrete action has been taken."

Samy Vellu also requested for an increase in allocation to fight social ills among the Indian youth for the next two years as the target group was widening.

He also urged the Youth and Sports Ministry to play a more dynamic role in overcoming the problems plaguing Indian youths.

Party members came under praise by him and Samy Vellu said the election process at the branch level reflected a high level of political maturity.

Samy Vellu ended his speech on an emotional note. He said although this would be the last time Dr Mahathir was opening the assembly, he would still be invited for future MIC assemblies.

