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12,000 for landmark convention

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - About 12,000 MIC leaders and members are set to create history in Shah Alam tomorrow with the largest gathering of Indians under one roof to pledge support to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

The MIC Election Machinery Convention at the Selangor Youth and Cultural Complex will also kickstart the party's preparations for the next general election by outlining strategies and appointing MIC election officers in all State and divisions.

The event will start with a welcome note by party secretarygeneral S. Sothinathan followed by an address by Samy Vellu and the opening speech by Abdullah.

In his speech, Samy Vellu is expected to emphasise the party's support for Abdullah and its appreciation to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his contributions.

Samy Vellu is also expected to outline the party's preparations for the general election.

"The main purpose of this convention is to show our support for the new Prime Minister and also to give all branch chairmen a chance to voice their views on the party's preparation for the general election," said Samy Vellu.

The MIC has 4,300 branches nationwide and boasts a membership of 601,012.

During the convention, members are also expected to pledge their undivided support to Samy Vellu.

This is in view of a recent statement by the Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan calling for Samy Vellu to make way for younger blood in the party.

Clearly upset over the statement, all three MIC vice-presidents - Datuk G. Palanivel, Datuk S. Veerasingam and Tan Sri K.S. Nijhar had issued a stern warning to Pandithan to "shut up and mind his own business".

During the one-day convention tomorrow, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob will present a working paper on preparations for the general election. Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo will also be present.