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Election of Vimalah to CWC shows members want new blood in leadership

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THE election of a woman delegate to the MIC central working committee at the party's general assembly last weekend surprised many.

More importantly, it sent a clear message that members wanted to see an injection of new blood in the leadership.

G. Vimalah Nair, 50, who was not on the "president's list", was the dark horse in the election of central working committee members.

She polled enough votes to emerge 18th in the 23-member CWC line-up.

It was not surprising then that many women delegates view her victory with pride, as though it was theirs, too. Many also dismissed any notion that hers was a lucky shot.

It is an indication to the leadership that it was time for a change in the line-up, said a party insider.

This has not escaped the attention of party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu who said that there would likely be changes to the party's list of candidates to contest the next general election.

There is no dearth in the party of young and qualified candidates who are keen to work for the community.

The contest for the CWC aside, the two-day assembly was especially a memorable one for the MIC since it was the last to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

CWC member Datuk V.K.K. Teagarajan lent some excitement earlier when he called for a Press conference to announce that he would contest one of the three vice-presidencies only to withdraw later.

Many who had lobbied hard for Teagarajan felt greatly let down by his withdrawal and some were overheard saying that he had got cold feet and others were of the opinion that he reached some understanding with the leadership.

"He had good grassroots support and the ability to go for the post. It was a real let down," said a party leader.

Teagarajan on Sunday was not only re-appointed to the CWC but also made party information chief, replacing Komala Krishnamoorthy.

His withdrawal gave the three incumbent vice-presidents an uncontested victory. Samy Vellu and deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam also retained their positions uncontested.

The Tamil school issue and the need to preserve the Tamil language dominated a large part of the debate with delegates strongly opposing any move to close down these schools.

Later at a Press conference, Samy Vellu said he had written to the Prime Minister requesting more financial assistance to upgrade about 20 Tamil schools a year over the next eight years.

Samy Vellu also spoke a great deal on the need for emergence of the new Malaysian Indian and for the community to discard the "labourer" image. Education, he said, would help to achieve this.

A woman delegate urged MIC leaders to go down to the ground and explain this to the community.

She praised Samy Vellu for recognising the efforts of the Wanita movement in trying to reach out to single Indian mothers.

Samy Vellu had on Sunday also announced a RM200,000 fund to assist single mothers set up small businesses.

However, based on history, the reputation earned by the community in repaying such loans has been very selfish and more often than not, these

loans die a natural death when the principal borrowers fail to repay.

Samy Vellu said loans to single mothers would not be given upfront, but in stages to help them buy the necessary equipment and run their operations on a week-to-week basis.

"If this can be done, then there is a good chance the party could successfully help ease the burden of single mothers," said the woman delegate.

Other issues raised during debate were fears of violence among Indian youths and also concerns over the number of deaths involving Indians which have occurred in police lock-ups.

Hopefully, the MIC Youth's recent launch of its Briged Pemuda would reach out to more youths and eventually reduce the number of Indian youths involved in such incidents.