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India conveys intention to strengthen ties with Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Indian Government has expressed its intention to strengthen ties with Malaysia and has outlined seven bilateral issues which need to be resolved.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said this was conveyed to him at a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha during his two-day trip to India beginning last Sunday.

Samy Vellu left for India soon after the party's annual general assembly on Sunday to meet with the Indian Government over increased landing rights for Malaysia Airlines flights.

Discussions over the increased landing rights came to an impasse following allegations that 162 Indian nationals detained in a joint operation by the police and immigration officers two months ago were abused and ill-treated.

"I had a 20-minute meeting with Vajpayee and a 45-minute meeting with Yashwant respectively.

"I also handed over a letter from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the Indian Government," he said.

Samy Vellu did not disclose details of the letter or what the six other bilateral issues are.

"I have informed Dr Mahathir of my meeting and given him details of the seven bilateral issues which need to be resolved," he said.

He said since the detention of the 162 nationals, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had written to the Indian Government.

Samy Vellu said during his visit he was told that the Indian Government was satisfied with the explanation and the prompt action taken by the Malaysian authorities in handling the issue.

"The Indian Government told me that they did not withdraw the increased landing rights, but temporarily put it on hold," he said.

"The matter will be discussed further," added Samy Vellu, who is also Works Minister.