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Pandithan faces more flak

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan came under fresh criticisms today with the MIC urging him to apologise to the King and the DAP calling for the revocation of his datukship.

MIC vice-president Datuk G. Palanivel said Pandithan owed an apology to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the public for not stating the truth in the application for datukship for Malaysia Nanban editorial adviser Athi Kumanan.

"When we ask for a top award from the King, the truth should be told. I am surprised this kind of thing can happen when a name is submitted to the King," he said in a statement.

Pandithan was quoted yesterday as saying that there was nothing wrong in referring to Athi Kumanan as the IPF deputy president in the nomination form for a "Datukship" title although the latter was not a party member.

"Is not all this a misuse of authority? Frankly speaking, a newspaper editor need not be a deputy president of a political party to qualify for an award. Many editors have been awarded Datukship on their merit as journalists," Palanivel said.

He described Pandithan's actions as a serious offence as it involved telling an untruth in official dealings with the King and Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh said Pandithan's Datukship should be revoked as he has proven himself an unfit person to continue using the title.

"What Pandithan has done amounts to improper conduct," he said in a statement.

Karpal said conferring awards on those unfit to hold them demeaned the sanctity and value of the awards, adding that titles should be bestowed upon sparingly and on deserving people.

"Any attempt to mislead the King (on awarding of titles) deserves punishment," he said.

Meanwhile, Pandithan said he would make a statement on Saturday on the matter.

He said he wanted to remain silent for the next few days as he wanted the issue to "cool down" first before responding.

"I have no comment for now. Give me some time before I issue any further statement. The issue has now become very serious and even the Opposition has commented on it.

"I will surely let you know when I have something to say. I will talk on Saturday," Pandithan said.

Wanita MIC head Senator Jaya Partiban said today it was unbecoming of a political leader like Pandithan to make false claims and not apologise.

"He should apologise. By making a false declaration, it clearly shows that he has no credibility. It also shows that he cannot be trusted as he had misled the people and the Government into believing something that was not true.

"Pandithan is keen that IPF should be accepted as a Barisan Nasional component party and yet he went around saying such things. This should not be the attitude of someone who aspires to be a part of the BN," she said.