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Pandithan's action unethical, say leaders

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Political leaders today said it was unethical for Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan to declare falsely the status of Malaysia Nanban editorial adviser Kumana Pupathi Athimulam or better known as Athi Kumanan, in the nomination form for a datukship from the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

They said Pandithan's act showed that he lacked credibility and could not be trusted as he had misled the people and the Government.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said Pandithan should be blacklisted from receiving any future Federal and State awards.

Dr Lim said it was wrong for Pandithan to provide inaccurate information to the award committee for the King's birthday celebrations.

"That (giving false information) should not be the way.

"Pandithan should be blacklisted from any future awards," said the Primary Industries Minister.

MIC vice-president Datuk S. Veerasingham said that a leader has to be truthful in order to gain respect.

"Pandithan clearly lacks this. He should be truthful about what actually transpired.

"He owes the Palace, Government and the people an apology for making that false claim.

"Nominating someone for a title is not a small matter and Pandithan has abused the trust ...He should have suggested someone from IPF who has contributed to the party and not nominate his friends.

"It is also illogical and misleading for Pandithan to claim that there was nothing wrong in nominating Athi Kumanan as the IPF deputy president when he wasn't even holding the post."

Yesterday, Pandithan admitted that Athi Kumanan was not an IPF member but said there was nothing wrong referring to him as the IPF deputy president in the "datukship" nomination form.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said Pandithan should rectify his mistake as it could jeopardise unity among the Indians.

He said leaders of the Indian-based political parties (MIC and IPF) should be able to work together for the benefit of the community.

MCA vice-president Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said IPF and Pandithan were "friends of BN." As a friend, IPF should not raise issues which were detrimental to BN in the next general election.

"The less we quarrel among friends, the better it is. Now, the focus should be on the next general election.

"MIC and IPF can both play an important role in delivering not only the Indian votes but also that of other races," added the Human Resources Minister.

In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah BN secretary Datuk Karim Bujang said giving misleading information on purpose was shameful and could mar the honour and integrity of such conferred titles.

"Such a person should be ashamed of himself."

Karim said that to avoid such incidents in the future, the authorities should look into setting up a committee to check the background of potential recipients.

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said he could not understand why Pandithan had referred to Athi Kumanan as the IPF deputy president when Athi Kumanan was not even a member.

"It is puzzling. Even if the IPF central working committee had offered Athi Kumaman the post, he is still not a party member, let alone the deputy president," said Kerk, the Kota Melaka MP.

Selangor DAP legal bureau head M. Manoharan urged Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Ghani Patail to charge Pandithan for giving a false statement to the King.

"Pandithan's conduct in giving the false statement to the King, the then Prime Minister (Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and the nation as a whole is despicable."

He added awards such as datukships were bestowed on individuals based on sincerity, credibility and service to the nation and Pandithan shouldn't have lied.

Pas Youth head Salahuddin Ayub said political leaders must be credible and Pandithan, as the IPF president must set a good example.