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Subramaniam: Stop meddling in MIC

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Breaking his silence, MIC deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam issued a very strong statement today: "Stop meddling in the affairs of MIC. It has capable leaders to run the party."

It was directed at People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kayveas and Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan who had been making remarks about the MIC leadership.

Said Subramaniam: "I think all this wild speculation, including comments by MIC leaders and members, should stop immediately."

He said MIC leaders and members should concentrate on party matters, and channel their enthusiasm and energy to the next general election.

"They should also concentrate on the national leadership change with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepping down as Prime Minister and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi taking over the helm instead of focusing their attention on the MIC leadership," he said at his office today.

He said Barisan Nasional component party leaders and members should concentrate on pledging their support for the new Prime Minister instead of bickering about who should step down in the MIC.

Subramaniam said he did not make any statement when the matter was first raised by Pandithan because he (Pandithan) was only giving his personal opinion based on the advice given by Dr Mahathir that veteran BN politicians who have been around for a long time should make way for new faces.

"That's Pandithan's personal opinion. Many others, including Cabinet members and politicians, also gave their opinions on the matter."

He said Dr Mahathir, who has vast experience in politics and had contributed greatly to the nation's development, gave his advice and it was up to the leaders of BN component parties to accept or reject it.

"I have nothing to say to that," he said.

Subramaniam added that he did not understand why people should make an issue of it when party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu had told MIC members to remain calm.

On Pandithan's claim that IPF would be able to join the BN if Subramaniam was at the helm of the MIC and that the main stumbling block to his party gaining admission was Samy Vellu, Subramaniam said:

"I follow what the party decides. We will cross the bridge when we come to it."

IPF had on numerous occasions applied to join the ruling coalition, but its applications were rejected. It was an open secret that the MIC was its main obstacle.

Subramaniam said the MIC, established in 1946 and which now has about 600,000 members, is capable of electing its own leaders.

Although Subramaniam, who is also Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, welcomed Kayveas' praise of Samy Vellu, he criticised the PPP president for saying that there was no other leader who was capable of leading the Indian community.

"This is an insult to the MIC members. MIC has competent leaders and members who are experienced and mature enough to elect whom they want as their leaders," he said.

"Kayveas must be careful in trying to judge others. It does not take too long for him and his leadership to be judged."

Subramaniam said he was refraining from saying further in the spirit of

BN.