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Tamil dailies involved in heated proxy war

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TAMIL Nesan and Malaysia Nanban have become embroiled in a heated proxy war between Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Datuk M.G. Pandithan with Page 1 leads resembling comment pieces.

The Tamil Nesan yesterday led off with a story alleging that Pandithan was scripting a drama in claiming that Malaysia Nanban editorial advisor Athi Kumanan was the new Indian Progressive Front deputy president.

The newspaper claimed this was a ploy by Pandithan to evade the law over allegations by the MIC president that the former had misled the King by recommending Athi for a datukship on grounds that he was already the party number two.

It also ran an excerpt from the New Straits Times on its front page which quoted Pandithan as admitting to the fact that Athi was not an IPF member at the time of the recommendation.

Tamil Nesan also ran an accompanying piece which stated that Pandithan should have elected an acting deputy president from one of the party's vice-presidents instead of choosing an outsider.

A third story claimed the episode involving Pandithan and Athi had given lie to the belief that Malaysia Nanban had been representing the views of the people in its editorial content.

Tamil Nesan alleged that its only real competition had actually been a mouth-piece for the IPF with the disclosure that Athi had been appointed its deputy president.

Malaysia Nanban, on the other hand, diverted reader attention by asking how Samy Vellu had obtained a copy of the letter from Pandithan to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad recommending Athi for a datukship.

Its lead story claimed Samy Vellu had breached the Official Secrets Act by releasing a copy of the letter which was a secret document the minute it reached Dr Mahathir.

The sub-heading for the story stated that the MIC chief could be sentenced to seven years' imprisonment if found guilty for the alleged crime and that a police report would be lodged on the matter.

Malaysia Nanban also frontpaged the appointment of Athi as IPF deputy president with statements by him and Pandithan that this had been kept under wraps for a specific reason.

It also ran a comment piece by Athi on Thursday which claimed that Samy Vellu had to make a clean breast of certain issues which had been dogging the MIC chief for several years.

These included the poor performance of Maika Holdings, the fate of the Telekom Malaysia shares given to the Indian community and the question of who were the registered owners of the party's Asian Institute of Medicine, Science and Technology.