

Why the blame game over Samy's polls defeat?

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COMMENT Not that it matters very much now, but S Samy Vellu's blaming Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his defeat in his former bailiwick of Sungai Siput in the last general election is interesting for what it discloses of the revisionist impulse.

Also, the timing of Samy's blame-fixing for his defeat draws attention to who would be the BN candidate to wrest the seat back from the clutches of the giant-slaying incumbent, Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj.

Experienced politicians do not normally engage in fault-assigning retrospectives without a motive; Samy is clearly up to something.

bagan pinang by-election 071009 samy vellu visit 02He claims that Mahathir had called on Malay voters in the constituency not to vote for the former MIC president out of resentment for Samy's objection to the entry of the Indian Progressive Front into the BN during the tail end of Mahathir's premiership.

According to the ruling coalition's rules of engagement, the objection of one component of the BN to the admission of a new applicant is a veto that cannot be overridden.

Samy now says that Mahathir's discharged his rancour over Samy's objection to the IPF's entry by publicly rooting for his defeat in Sungai Siput in the last election.

Indeed Mahathir wielded and still commands a lot of influence in Umno and BN, but to claim that such sway as he enjoyed extended to being able to influence the outcome of the ballot in Sungai Siput in March 2008 is stretching things some.

Samy's hubristic presumption

Even Samy Vellu would have felt the same way, if he has been apprised that Mahathir was signaling for his defeat, in the few days before the vote on March 8 that year.

For the MIC impresario was at the top of his showman form in the immediate prelude to the vote and had comported himself like he was stone cold certain that he would be returned to what would have been his eight-term as Sungai Siput MP.

NONETHis reporter happened to be in Sungai Siput on March 4 and was in the operations office of Jeyakumar (left) that afternoon when two senior local journalists arrived in a mild stupor from having witnessed an ardent performance by the then MIC titan at the latter's election headquarters.

One of the two, adept at mimicking the mannerisms of the subjects he has interviewed, proceeded to give a demonstration of Samy the impresario to the knot of journalists who had gathered around him after he disclosed he had been just been to interview the grandee himself.

To put things plainly, from the journalist's account, the MIC supremo was regally dismissive of speculation that he could lose, this despite reverberations from the polls' grapevine indicative of ominous tidings for MIC candidates not favoured by Hindraf, the pressure group that blew in like a gale into the national political stage the previous November when it organised a demonstration in Kuala Lumpur by the Indian poor that was truly impressive in size and determination.

"They (Hindraf) are only a group of 1,800 people," Samy reportedly said to the journalist who interviewed him that morning.

"All this (meaning the hubbub caused by Hindraf) would disappear by Thursday," said Samy on the Tuesday before Saturday's vote.

Pointing to the drains and roads outside his office, Samy said to the journalist, "You know who built and maintains these things?"

He refrained from giving the answer, assuming it was obvious.

All in all, it was a display of hubristic presumption that long incumbencies in power breed.

Palanivel in search for a seat

Samy Vellu, like most of the rest of the BN leadership cohort, did not anticipate that the election would result in a political tsunami.

NONESo now what gives in his attempt to find a scapegoat for his defeat?

It is now quite clear that MIC president G Palanivel's (left in photo) shopping around for a seat to contest is not going to issue in his settling on Sungai Siput.

That would make the man who doled out 7,000 hampers to residents of Sungai Siput over the Deepavali celebrations last October and followed up with a gift of 200 laptops to selected youths the favoured MIC candidate to contest the seat against Parti Sosialis Malaysia incumbent, Jeyakumar.

The glad-hander bears family ties to the former MIC kingpin - who else has the wherewithal to play sugar daddy?

Long incumbencies not only breed arrogant presumption, it also stokes dynastic aspirations.

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