

No big fireworks expected at MIC AGM
Malaysiakini.com
July 09, 2010

The past few months have been rough for MIC president S Samy Vellu.

The beginning of 2010 was smack in the middle of what appears to be a tailspin for the supremo, who has held the party with an iron grip for 31 years.

First it was the debacle during the run-up to the Hulu Selangor by-election in March, in which the BN leadership had to "compromise" with the elder statesman who had earlier insisted on fielding his "successor" G Palanivel as the BN candidate.

While they managed to reach an agreement to select young and relatively baggage-free candidate P Kamalanathan - who would eventually go on to win the polls - many would agree that the incident, highlighted with very vocal outbursts from some local Umno leaders, has left Samy Vellu red-faced.

And then there was the Gerakan Anti-Samy (GAS) movement which tried to capture the Indian community's imagination with their ambitious rallies and VCD exposés in a bid to oust the long-time politician.

While these events could have brought down any politician of lesser calibre, it appears that Samy Vellu has almost managed to shake the dust off his jacket and emerge unscathed.

Or has he?

Many pundits have expected that the two-day MIC 64th Annual General Meeting (AGM), which starts tomorrow at Putra World Trade Centre, will be relatively free from drama, like most of the party's AGMs in recent years.

Not an accurate barometer

And despite the whirlwind of controversy surrounding MIC, party observers will agree that the AGM is usually not an accurate barometer for the grassroots sentiments.

GAS leader KP Samy (right), who was sacked in May from the party proper and the powerful central working committee (CWC) for calling for Samy Vellu's resignation, said that the AGM will be like all the past AGMs - filled with 'yes' men singing high praises for the president.

"Either that, or the branch leaders and delegates will be too fearful of Samy Vellu. The outspoken ones will not be picked by the AGM chairman for debates," he said, adding that there is a stringent vetting process to speak at the AGM so that known critics will not be given a chance.

"Even if they do end up speaking, the moment they say something uncomplimentary about Samy Vellu, they'll have their microphones switched off," he said. Samy also anticipate attacks on GAS by the debaters, who will use the AGM as an opportunity to counter the movement's numerous press conferences and their creative use of abbreviations.

"I am very sure they will picture us as anti-community or anti-BN, which we are not. We are

such strong supporters of BN," he said when contacted.

'Only highlight is Samy Vellu'

With Samy Vellu's announcement of a "transition plan" for him to hand over the party reins to deputy president G Palanivel by September next year, many have also suspected that some of Samy Vellu's henchmen will be picked to voice out their unending devotion for the party president.

"Some will say to him 'don't worry about GAS', 'you are irreplaceable, please stay' or something along those lines," said a highly-placed MIC source.

However, when asked if Samy Vellu would be using the AGM as a platform to push Palanivel (right) into the limelight, the source laughed and said: "It is not Samy Vellu's style".

"When it comes to the AGM, the only highlight is Samy Vellu. Nobody is allowed to take the limelight away from him.

"At most, he will just mention one or two things about Palanivel, perfunctory compliments," he said.

But the source, having attended many MIC AGMs in his life, said that the recent events and rumours of unseen Umno hands among the MIC leaders will drive some of the delegates into engaging in a trash-talking session about their BN counterparts.

"Samy Vellu is making Umno the bogeyman and frightening the delegates with it," he said, adding he expects Umno-bashing will be quite popular this year.

"Umno, despite whatever people say, has been fair with MIC. (Samy Vellu) is just using it for his personal agenda," he said.

But on the question of whether Samy Vellu would pull a surprise on his delegates and suddenly backtrack on his resignation promise, many leaders have said that it is unlikely.

"Although he has done this many times, usually claiming that he is still needed in the party, he is still smart enough to know that the members will not buy it if he announces it now.

"But September is still far away. Just wait for a few months before then, and I am sure something is bound to happen to make him 'stay'," said the source.