



I'll step down in January: Samy Vellu
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S Samy Vellu, one of the longest serving and colourful party leaders in the country, today announced that he will step down as MIC president in January next year.

The 74-year-old Kluang-born Samy Vellu said his deputy and former press secretary senator G Palanivel will succeed him.

Samy Vellu, who took over the helm of the party as acting president on 13 Sept 1979 following the death of V Manickavasagam, said he has informed the Central Working Committee (CWC) of his decision.

"I will announce the specific date later," he told a press conference after chairing a CWC meeting.

According to him, the resignation could take place before or after he attended the ninth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi where he would be discussing opportunities for Malaysian contractors to be involved in the building of infrastructure in India.

Palanivel, the deputy minister of plantation industries and commodities, who was seated beside Samy Vellu, declined to comment, saying that he would comment at a later date.

In May this year, during the Federal Territory MIC convention, Samy Vellu had said that he would step down "seven to eight months" before his term ends in March 2012.

Samy Vellu, who won unopposed as party president in September last year for the record 11th term, said his resignation before completion of his term would give the new leader a chance to take over the presidency and give him ample time to prepare for the next general election.

"If I wait for another two years, I don't think it's good, because we want to have the new leader for the election who will have his own policies and his own word of order and I think it will be better in order to prepare for the election," he said.

Samy Vellu, who lost in the 2008 general election, said he would leave the party completely afterwards and would not disturb the new leadership.

Samy Vellu, who entered the government as a deputy minister of housing and local government in 1978 before becoming minister of works and utilities a year later, said the decision to quit early was not due to pressure from any group.

"The pressure group (GAS) came after the recent Hulu Selangor by-election.

"However, I did already mention about my resignation to the prime minister Najib Abdul Razak before that by-election," he said.

When asked about post-retirement plans, Samy Vellu said he would be concentrating on enhancing the relationship between India and Malaysia in terms of infrastructure.

"There is urgency in India's infrastructure development requirements, and there is a lot of opportunity for Malaysian contractors.

"I want to give them the push and make use of the development programmes India is implementing," he said.

MIC vice-president and Human Resources Minister Dr S Subramaniam said the change in party leadership was normal and Samy Vellu himself had told members about his intention before, and only the date was not specified.

"So, he has announced it today. I hope the leadership transition will be smoother and hope he will always be there to advise the new leadership," he told reporters.

Another vice-president K Devamany said Samy Vellu had contributed a lot to the party and the Indian community in the country.

"He started as an ordinary member in the MIC and worked (his way up) gradually to become the president," he said.

- Bernama

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