

Samy steps down, loyalists step in
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 6, 2010

MIC president S Samy Vellu has finally stepped down after helming the nation's most important Indian political party for 31 years.

NONEHis handpicked successor is his former aide-turned-deputy G Panivel, who is now the party's eighth president.

Vice-president Dr S Subramaniam will be promoted to deputy president.

Speaking to reporters after the party's three-hour central working committee (CWC) meeting, Samy Vellu said: "I feel very happy to leave my job to Palanivel and he will leave it to Dr S Subramaniam."

"I decided to make way for my replacement to give him (Palanivel) more time to be fully prepared to face the next general election which will be the 13th.

"The moment I leave this room I'm no more president... that's the end of it but I'll go and sit in the (president's) room until this evening because there are many things and I can't vacate it immediatedly," said Samy Vellu in jest.

He said the CWC had accepted his resignation and unanimously agreed to promote Palanivel as president and Subramaniam as deputy.

"Although I have resigned as president I'm still a member of MIC and will continue to serve the Indian community and the people," he said with a smile.

Asked if he is sad about leaving the party he has steered for more than three decades sooner than expected, Samy Vellu said: "I've cleared my head (over) the past 10 days because I know the time has come for a leadership change (and) to look into the needs that are arising now and the political challenges that we face... it's not at all difficult for me. I'm very happy to hand over power."

Moreover, he added that he is not worried about Palanivel's capacity to lead as the "new president isn't someone new".

"Whatever I've been doing he has seen it and he has heard it all and he has been working with me.

"Even if the challenge of an election comes he will be prepared to face it even if it is in six months. He has the capacity to face it."

He said the major change the Indian community has undergone is the "modernisation of their minds, thinking of the future and saving for the future".

Although Samy Vellu sidestepped questions on whether he will be taking up the ambassador's post offered by the government, he hinted that he has been travelling abroad in recent months to boost the country's economy.

Samy Vellu added that he will not hold any position in the party but that he will "gladly assist" the new leaders if consulted.

"I don't think life has ended just yet," he said when asked about his future plans.

Smooth transition

Met later, Palanivel expressed gratitude and thanked Samy Vellu for making this a smooth transition.

"I will run the party in both - his (Samy Vellu's) style and in my style - he is a little different in character - he is fast and I'm patient," said Palanivel.

"I can't be Samy Vellu. We are different people but we will work together as a force in this party."

It is understood that the party has put in a request to the government to give Palanivel a full ministerial post.

He was appointed the deputy plantation industries and commodities minister as a compromise after BN refused to allow him to contest for the Hulu Selangor parliamentary seat in April.

However, Palanivel evaded the matter and said he would clarify matters in a few days.

Samy Vellu, 74, was supposed to have served out his term, which expires in March 2012.

However, there were calls for him to retire earlier and allow Palanivel to take reins of the party to prepare for the 13th general election.

Critics have long said that Samy Vellu has overstayed his welcome as president and that this had contributed to the party's dismal performance in the 2008 general election.

Samy Vellu himself was defeated by a lightweight opponent for the Sungai Siput parliamentary seat, which had been his stronghold for decades.

New MIC chief to announce plans soon