

**Mahathir: Samy stifled Indian voices**  
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**Soon Li Tsin**

The problems plaguing the Indian community could be resolved by removing MIC president S Samy Vellu who stifled Indian voices, said former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.  
MCPX

mahathir interview 050308 virtueIn the second part of an exclusive interview with the Malaysian statesman, Mahathir said removing the MIC leader would allow more Indian voices to be heard.

"I know their main grouse is not with me, their main grouse is with Samy Vellu because with him there, another Indian has been deprived of the chance to come up," he said.

Speaking to Malaysiakini at his Perdana Leadership Foundation office in Putrajaya, Mahathir deflected allegations that the root cause of the Indian community's strife was due to his pro-Malay focus during his tenure as PM.

"So they want to blame me? It is not that. Samy Vellu did not ask for assistance. The problem is that he is preventing other Indians from having a say.

"(Indian Progressive Front president MG) Pandithan was got rid of, (former MIC deputy president S) Subramaniam was got rid of, K Pathmanaban died but of course before that, he was (former MIC vice-president).

"That is his (Samy Vellu) way of doing things and of course the other voices cannot reach me. And of course, he doesn't say there is this battling among the Indians," he explained.

Pandithan, who was formerly with MIC, started IPF in 1990 after falling out with Samy. The two parties have been at odds with each other, especially after IPF sought to join the BN coalition.

Both Subramaniam and Pathmanaban have a history of bad blood with Samy in their failed attempts to challenge for the party presidency.

Mahathir also said in jest: "You know Indians are very political. Tunku Abdul Rahman used to say if there is one Indian, there is one political party. If there are two Indians, there are two political parties."

**'Don't stay too long'**

In the interview that lasted almost an hour, Mahathir also alluded that people should not stay in power for too long and chances should be given to others.

samy vellu and mahathir"It is up to him to decide (to step down). A lot of people will say "if you step down, we will step down" and they will cry and all that. But when I step down, nobody stepped down," he mused.

Samy Vellu who is the works minister and the longest-serving cabinet minister has been the MIC president since 1979 for 10 consecutive terms.

Mahathir also criticised Samy for not bringing up Indian issues in the cabinet.

"That is his excuse. I know how much he talks in the cabinet. Don't (say) something that others cannot prove because nobody heard him in cabinet except us.

"He talks, but these things were not the issues that he raised - like the recovery of money for the Indian community who were brought here by force and all that.

"He never mentioned that, I've never heard him. He never said that the Malays were committing genocide and ethnic cleansing. He never said that. Why didn't he say that?" he asked.

Asked to comment on the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf), the former PM said their demands were unreasonable.

"Quite a lot of their demands were quite unreasonable - practically denying the position of the Malays as the indigenous race on this country. You know this is something very sensitive to the Malays.

"If the government tell the Malays 'sorry you've got the same status as the Indians' I think there will be a big drop of support for the government from the Malays," Mahathir added.

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