

**Q&A: Indian grouses not with me but Samy  
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the Indian grouses are not directed at him but at MIC president and Works Minister S Samy Vellu in this second instalment of a three-part interview. MCPX

**Let's talk about Indian sentiments on the ground. Many are saying that the root cause of the anger started during your time when you ignored all the other communities in order to focus on developing the Malay community. The Indians have been so marginalised that the government today is bearing the brunt of it. Can you comment on that?**

mahathir interview 050308 angerSo they want to blame me? They (won't) vote for me now (laughs). Look at the statistics. Indians make up nine percent of the population in Malaysia. The number of doctors, they make up 40 percent.

**But that is coming down over the years.**

Well, it is not coming down, it went up during my time. It never was 40 percent until I was PM. Why didn't they say 'thank you, thank you, thank you'? I get many people coming up to me to say thank you but very few Indians say thank you.

I know their main grouse is not with me, their main grouse is with Samy Vellu because with Samy Vellu there, there is no chance for another Indian to come up.

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.

**As the PM then, you could've done something like tell Samy Vellu that this is not the way to do things instead of allowing him to proceed with it.**

samy vellu g pandithan 230407It is not that. Samy Vellu did not ask for assistance. The problem is that he is preventing other Indians from having a say.

(MG) Pandithan (right in photo) was got rid of, (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.

**Would you say the malady affecting the Indians will go away with the removal of Samy Vellu?**

It could be, it could be ... because then other voices will be heard. The thing is that you must know when we formed the Barisan Nasional, Umno accepted PAS - another Malay

party into BN. The fact that PAS left later on is another matter.

But Samy Vellu insists that nobody else, no other Indian organisation can come in and this is frustrating a lot of people who do not agree with him.

### **Do you think it is time for Samy Vellu to step down now?'**

It is up to him to decide. 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.

### **Do you believe Samy Vellu has overstayed his tenure?**

batu talam nominations 170107 samy vellu I think that people should not stay on for too long. I felt that I stayed for too long also. I would have gone in 1998 but because of the problems by Anwar (Ibrahim), I had to stay back.

But I went away on my own volition, I was not pressured out. I was still very popular at that time and I know that if I wanted to stay on, Umno would bank me as the leader.

But I thought that it is not fair for me to be there all the time. You must give a chance for another. Of course, many people were saying "when is this old man going to go" so okay, I went. Now you have another leader, you decide whether it is a wise move or not.

### **To Samy's defence, he said he has brought up the Indian issues at the cabinet level, he has blamed the past and present administrations for not pursuing the proposals he has brought about.**

That is his excuse. I know how much he talks in the cabinet. Don't tell 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 has never said that the Malays were committing genocide and ethnic cleansing. He never said that. Why didn't he say that?

### **Even until today he is not saying that. Instead, Samy Vellu is saying that the government is not supporting the Indian economically.**

That is not true either. Let's do a statistical study of all these things. What is the position of the Malay community and what is the position of the Indian community.

The average income of the Malay are lower than the average income of the Indians. You have to remember that for a small number of people the average is meaningful but for a big number of people, this is not meaningful.

### **So can we say Samy Vellu is a burden for BN in light of the elections and the campaign?**

I can't say that because I am a supporter of BN.

**Are you saying that Samy Vellu is shifting the blame to the government to cover up his shortcomings?**

You can assume that but I didn't say that.

**What do you think about the Hindu Action Rights Force (Hindraf) and their demands?**

Well, 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. Either you get the support of the Malays or you get the support of the Indians.

If the government tells 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. But you have to read the memorandum they sent to Her Majesty's government.

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