

**Samy Vellu: Did he speak up or not?**  
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MIC President S Samy Vellu has been facing many attacks from all sides in recent days. These attacks have intensified especially in the post-Hindraf rally in November last year and during the 2008 election campaigning period now. MCPX

Samy Vellu has been very skilled in avoiding the venom from the sting of the darts. This he has done through aggressive rebuttals in press conferences, adverts in papers and dissemination of information. At the same time he has not shied away from the angry crowds whom he calls as his people when they want to talk him.

With these direct approaches, there is a definite softening of the heart of ordinary people except diehard Indian opposition members in the run up to polling day.

However the attack by Dr Mahathir Mohamad two days before polling is really uncalled for. Furthermore to say that 'Samy Vellu did not ask for assistance' is totally unbecoming of a former prime minister whom we hold so dearly.

I do agree with Mahathir that Samy Vellu would not have highlighted the Hindraf position on 'genocide' or 'ethnic cleansing' which is an argument that MIC does not subscribe to and an argument used by Hindraft only recently. MIC has also not subscribed to the Malay dominance theory nor questioned the position of the specific privileges for the Malay community.

However time and time again, Samy Vellu has been consistent in highlighting the plight of the poorer sections of the Indian community on specific matters related to:

- \* Plantation workers their monthly wages, displacement, social conditions and retraining
- \* On matters related to the Tamil language and Tamil schools especially in the infrastructure requirements
- \* On the weak economic position of Malaysian Indians especially with reference to the equity position
- \* On the inability of Indian youths to secure adequate places in higher education
- \* On the requirement of foreign workers by Indian business community especially restaurant owners, textile shops, provision shops, jewelers, barbers and metal traders
- \* On the issues related to Indian youth, social ills and gang-related problems and the need for social intervention programmes
- \* On the issues pertaining to the urban poor and low income families with regards to housing, welfare, public facilities in high density low cost housing areas.

**Gross misrepresentation**

The Yayasan Strategik Sosial was established by the MIC in 1997 and we have prepared many papers for consideration at the Second Economic Consultative Committee, Input into the Third Outline Perspective Plan, Eighth Malaysia Plan and Ninth Malaysia Plan. These are also in record to show the submissions indicating the status, plight and requirements of the poorer sections of the community.

All these were directed and commissioned by Samy Vellu who has played a very important role in policy advocacy on behalf of the Indian community within the government.

During every MIC AGM attended by Mahathir, a whole list of community needs and concerns were presented as the presidential address by the MIC president. MIC clearly articulated the issues and concerns. Furthermore the MIC general assembly resolutions have also systematically highlighted all the major concerns of the community. These were submitted to all the relevant government agencies.

Therefore, to say that the MIC president has not asked for assistance is gross misrepresentation of a man who has been very vocal in all the meetings he has participated in. How is it, that Najib Abdul Razak could make a public declaration on Feb 3, 2008 at the PWTC that Samy Vellu fights for the community in the cabinet?

'So, if people accuse Dato Seri Samy Vellu of not fighting for the Indian community, I will be the first to deny, because he has fought for Indians. He has fought hard for the Indian community. He is very colourful in his presentation. And he does that because he is the leader of the MIC and of the Indian community,' said Najib.

### **Delivery of services**

In my assessment it is only fair and just to acknowledge that Samy Vellu has spoken up on all the critical matters affecting the community. The government has acknowledged these concerns as reflected in the appropriate action of the government in the time of Mahathir such as the providing of financial assistance for the rebuilding of Tamil schools, funds for the purchase of Tafe college and the building of the Aimst University.

In addition, government established the Cabinet Committee on Urban Poverty and also another cabinet committee to address the squatter issue in the Klang valley. The initial work by the cabinet committee on addressing social ills in the community was re-established as the National Social Council. These were major policy drives at the national level recognising the Indian concerns along with those of other communities.

The Indian community's concerns and the uprising of the grassroots is over their dissatisfaction on the monitoring and the delivery of services. There are however clear indications in the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plans and the government has executed programmes such as skills-training for underachieving Indian youths through Giat Mara or micro-business training and access to micro-business loans.

However there is an urgent need through the Mid-Term Review of the Ninth Malaysia Plan to enlarge the outreach and ensure a much larger number of youths are able to access the services and provisions.

Furthermore, as promised by both the prime minister and deputy prime minister, the Indian concerns of the lower thirty percent must be addressed as national concerns. This, I believe, should be the main agenda for the post-2008 elections.

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