

MIC big guns bury the hatchet
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MIC president S Samy Vellu and his former estranged deputy S Subramaniam have agreed to set aside their differences to rebuild the party after it was crushed in the March 8 polls. MCPX

subramaniam samy vellu and micAccording to party sources, the veteran politicians met recently to discuss the matter. It is believed that the meeting took place at Samy Vellu's house in Kuala Lumpur.

The president was also said to have relayed his decision to work together with Subramaniam for the sake of party unity to all MIC top leaders.

kayveasApart from this, sources said Samy Vellu and PPP president M Kayveas have also agreed to cooperate and not attack each other in future. This decision was reached when the two leaders met at the Barisan Nasional (BN) supreme council meeting on Monday.

Kayveas, the former deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Department, was also defeated in the polls.

'Saddest day in my political life'

During a press conference at his residence in Petaling Jaya yesterday evening, Subramaniam said he had offered to help rebuild MIC.

"March 8 was the saddest day of my political life. Although I did not contest, it was sad to see so many BN seats fall and even sadder to see MIC lose so many seats.

subramaniam interview 141005 point out"It was very painful to see such results meted out by the people," he said, adding that all quarters must accept the fact that something is wrong.

In the elections, MIC's top echelon, including its president, were wiped out. The other big casualties were deputy president G Palanivel, vice-presidents S Sothinathan and S Veerasingam, Youth chief SA Vigneswaran and Women's wing chief P Komala Devi.

The party lost six of its nine parliamentary seats and 13 of its 19 state seats.

Ties between Subramaniam and Samy Vellu had been strained for years. In the 2006 party polls, Subramaniam was defeated by Palanivel - who was endorsed by the president - for the number two post.

Return to the fold

Subramaniam said as a long-time deputy president, he had witnessed the party grow in strength and everybody must learn from Saturday's lesson.

Revealing that he spoke to Samy Vellu on Monday, the former deputy president said he was confident that MIC could be rebuilt and reinvented with help from all quarters.

"It should become an open party to all Indians. Nobody has to be on the outside. All of them should come forward to help the party regain its former strength," he said.

Asked if this included those in the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) as well, Subramaniam said all were welcome.

"Those out of the party (MIC) did not necessarily leave on their own, they went out for different reasons," he said alluding to those who were expelled or sidelined by Samy Vellu.

IPF was started by MG Pandithan, a former MIC vice-president expelled by Samy Vellu. Both leaders have since patched up as well.

On whether he would vie for positions in the party, Subramaniam replied: "There is no point in looking for positions in a weakened party."

The veteran politician said he would derive happiness from helping to rebuild the party and added that he believes the BN leadership would also welcome this move.

He also conceded that the MIC grassroots were "confused" and "wanted direction."

Is Samy Vellu to blame?

Subramaniam was also asked to comment on the suggestion that Samy Vellu was the reason behind MIC's shocking performance.

"Now is not the time to point fingers," he said. "We have to look at ways and means to strengthen the party."

On the calls for the president to vacate his post, Subramaniam said he does not believe the party would become stronger just because Samy Vellu leaves.

"But everybody has to leave at some point of time," he added.

"Everybody has to do their part, they don't have to hold positions to stay. I don't have positions but I can help, I can recruit more members and talk to people (about the party)," he said.

malaysia budget 2007 2008 070907 samy velluSamy Vellu, 72, has been president of MIC for the past 28 years and critics had constantly accused him of ruling with an iron fist.

On ways to redeem MIC, Subramaniam stressed that there should not be arrogance and the party must get closer to the people to become a "people's party."

"With the right strategies and right approaches, it can be built back," he said. "We need to get closer to the people, the party is weak, the president has lost. It is a sad thing, I have no joy in seeing what I helped build destroyed."

He also said MIC needed bright young people to win over the hearts of the younger generation in the community.

Responding to a question on whether race-based parties still have a future in this country, he said even multiracial parties talk about the ethnicity of their candidates.

"There was one multiracial party which did not field any Indian candidates in the polls and there was much hue and cry over this," he added in reference to Gerakan which was also trounced in the elections.

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