

Samy calls for Hindraf 5's release
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In a dramatic about-turn, MIC president S Samy Vellu today called for the release of the five Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leaders held without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA). MCPX

The veteran politician said he will meet Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi soon to discuss this matter.

He also urged Hindraf chairperson P Waythamoorthy - who is currently in London on self-exile - to return to the country and be reunited with his family, saying that the latter is not a political refugee.

Samy Vellu was speaking to reporters after opening the MIC divisional leaders workshop on 'Rebranding MIC' at the party's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

hindraff isa detainees 141207The Hindraf leaders detained under the security law are Waythamoorthy's brother, Uthayakumar, V Ganabatirau, M Manoharan, T Vasantha Kumar and R Kengadharan.

The five - four of whom are lawyers - were arrested shortly after organising a mammoth street rally in Kuala Lumpur which drew some 30,000 people on Nov 25 last year.

Approached by detainees' families

Samy Vellu revealed that the families of Manoharan and R Kengadharan had approached him for assistance.

"Because they made an approach, I will talk to the PM (about securing their freedom)," he said, adding, "We also don't want them to be kept inside.

malaysia budget 2007 2008 070907 samy vellu"The government has to make a decision. Kenghadharan is very sick, Manoharan is an elected member. So I think it is quite reasonable. I am going to ask PM (to release them) and meet the Internal Security Minister (Syed Hamid Syed Albar).

"I made some moves on this earlier, but I didn't tell anybody. I will now make a very strong move to see what can be done," he added

Manoharan won the Kota Alam Shah state seat in Selangor under a DAP ticket in the March 8 elections.

In the past, Samy Vellu had been critical of Hindraf and the Nov 25 demonstration. The movement, in return, also accused MIC and the party's boss of failing to uplift the status of the Indian community.

Not a publicity stunt

Responding to a question, Samy Vellu denied that the move to call for the five's release was a publicity stunt.

Describing it as being motivated by "fairness", he said: "At the same time, we feel that as Indians, we have to do something about this."

hindraf isa detainees 141207 updatedThe MIC president also revealed how he had helped secure the release of four students detained with scores others in the wake of the Hindraf rally.

Thirty-one detainees were later charged with the attempted murder of a policeman, but this was subsequently dropped.

Samy Vellu said this happened because he spoke to the prime minister and attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail.

"But one of the detainees' fathers scolded me like hell... (the father said) 'Who the hell are you?', 'Where were you when my son was arrested?'

"He ashamed me, it was very unreasonable. But I didn't take it to mind, as long as the students were released and the (attempted murder) charge against the others was reduced," he added.

The MIC president said "many had argued for them because they want publicity." "We only want the truth," he said.

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