

MIC leaders defend party boss
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MIC leaders today came out in defence of their president S Samy Vellu who was criticised for asking the government to free the five Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leaders held under the Internal Security Act (ISA). MCPX

samy vellu 010307The leaders were responding to Umno vice-president and Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam who was quoted in the press today as saying that Samy Vellu should not use the issue as a publicity stunt for his own political interest.

ali rustamDescribing the call as inappropriate since it involved national security, Ali Rustam said: "Don't use the issue for publicity just to get support during the coming MIC general assembly."

However, MIC deputy president G Palanivel said the Umno politician was wrong in claiming that Samy Vellu's statement was politically motivated.

He said Ali Rustam can also be accused of hitting at Samy Vellu and Hindraf as a publicity stunt for his own political interest.

"We can also say that he is using the issue for publicity to get support during the Umno general assembly in December," he added in a media statement.

Syed Hamid commended

On the same note, Palanivel commended the view of Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said he would have done the same thing if he was in Samy Vellu's shoes.

The minister said: "That is his right as the leader of the Indian community to fight for the cause but my decision will be according to the law. I might have brought up the issue myself if I was in his position. However, I have my own job and responsibility to perform and so does he."

g palanivelPalanivel said he appreciated Syed Hamid's statement in the spirit with which he had spoken and urged the minister to review not only the detention of the five Hindraf leaders but also others detained without trial.

The MIC leader said those detained under ISA can be tried in open court under the country's existing laws if there was a case.

"Long-term detention under ISA was not the right move morally when the country is moving in the direction of a true democracy," he added.

Expressing community's views

Meanwhile, MIC information chief M Saravanan said the party president was merely expressing the feelings of the majority of Indians who want the five to be released from detention.

"All he (Samy Vellu) said was that he will take the plea to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for consideration

"They (the five) had consistently said they were prepared to meet Abdullah which shows that they still have respect for the prime minister," he added in a statement.

m saravanan mic info chief Saravanan, who is also deputy federal territories minister, pointed out that if Samy Vellu wanted to use the Hindraf issue to gain political mileage, he would have done so before the March 8 elections.

"The elections in MIC is only next year and there is nothing wrong with a leader of the Indian community expressing the views and feelings of the people to the prime minister," he said, adding that MIC members have given a clear mandate for Samy Vellu to remain as president and therefore there is no need for "political stunts" by outsiders.

"In fact, it seems Ali Rustam wants to use this issue for his political mileage as the Umno party elections is in December. He is known for shooting off his mouth," he said, referring to the chief minister's comments during last year's PPP convention in the state.

During the convention, Ali Rustam said PPP should leave the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition if the party was not happy with the seat allocations.

hindraf isa detainees 141207 updated Saravanan said Ali Rustam and the leaders of other component parties must realise that they are working with Abdullah and his deputy Najib Abdul Razak to bring the Indian community back into the BN fold.

"If any one of them finds it difficult to digest MIC's request, then they should speak to us rather than going to the media as it only causes uneasiness and problems," he added.

In making the call on Sunday, Samy Vellu - who was once highly critical of Hindraf - denied that it was a publicity stunt.

The Hindraf leaders detained under the security law are P Uthayakumar, V Ganabatirau, M Manoharan, T Vasantha Kumar and R Kengadharan.

The five were arrested shortly after organising a mammoth street rally which drew some 30,000 disgruntled Indians to the streets in Kuala Lumpur on Nov 25 last year.

In the March 8 polls, Manoharan won the Kota Alam Shah state seat in Selangor which he contested under a DAP ticket.

Meanwhile, the Internal Security Minister has today rejected Manoharan's application to attend the swearing-in ceremony for elected state representatives.

Manoharan and his four Hindraf colleagues are being held in Taiping's detention camp.