

Free Hindraf 5 : MIC chief returns fire
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MIC president S Samy Vellu today launched a counter attack against those who assailed him for calling on the government to free the five Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leaders detained without trial. MCPX

ali rustam Kicking off with Umno vice-president and Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam, he said: "I don't worry about Ali Rustam."

"Whatever he says has nothing to do with me. He has got his own politics but I have no politics. I am talking as a man who feels for the people inside," he added when asked about this during a press conference at the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

On Monday, Ali Rustam told the MIC president not to use the Hindraf issue for his own political interest.

samy vellu pc 120308 defined Next in Samy Vellu's line of fire were the critical voices in Hindraf.

"The second day after I said this (free the five), a lot of Hindraf fellows were attacking me.

"I know why they attacked me, they like them (the five) to be in detention for a long time in order to attain their political status ... I think it is real nonsense.

"When somebody is trying to help them, they are saying 'leave us, leave us, you are not genuine'.

"How do I prove I am genuine? You think I have to put a plastic soda on my body, clean and make my skin white before they believe me."

Supposed to meet Hindraf chairperson

Asked if Hindraf chairperson P Waythamoorthy was supposed to meet him during a recent trip to India, Samy Vellu said they spoke to each other.

p waytha moorthy "Waythamoorthy spoke to me, I also spoke to him. He promised that when I went to India, we will have a meeting to discuss the issues that are confronting us.

"Then he said he is going to Bombay (Mumbai) and I went to Madras (Chennai). Then he said let us reserve the 27th of last month for our discussion.

"I waited in my hotel, I waited and waited up to 11 o'clock and I gave him a call but he did not attend the phone, then I packed up my things and came back to Malaysia ... Hindraf is not my enemy, but they are not my friends also," he added.

Waythamoorthy - who is in London in self-exile - was also critical of Samy Vellu's decision to push for the release of the five Hindraf leaders held under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

hindraff isa detainees 141207The Hindraf chairperson's brother, Uthayakumar, is among those detained. The rest are M Manoharan, V Ganabathirau, T Vasantha Kumar and R Kenghadharan.

They were arrested shortly after organising a mammoth rally in Kuala Lumpur on Nov 25 which saw some 30,000 Indians taking to the streets.

In the past, Samy Vellu had been highly critical of the movement and the demonstration.

Sad about Dr Mahathir's remarks

Asked if MIC is now recognising the Hindraf struggle as legitimate by calling for the release of its leaders, the president said: "I am not talking about the legitimate thing or whatever they are talking about."

"The question is ... what is due to Indians was not attended to by the government. I have raised this a thousand times in the cabinet. I am very particular about it even from the time of (former premier) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad)," he added.

On that note, Samy Vellu said - in reference to Mahathir's comments published in Malaysiakini - that he was saddened by the former premier's assertion that the MIC president did not raise these issues then.

lingam tape inquiry day 4 170108 mahathir"I have got evidence to say the amount of things that I have raised in the cabinet. I have all the cabinet minutes.

"I was so unhappy that Mahathir said I did not raise anything... But I don't want to talk about him, I respect him, he is a great man. I don't want to argue with him. I still have a lot of respect, but I wanted to correct him that I have asked (about the issues).

"If he says 'no' ask him to put his hand on his chest and find out whether it is true," he added.

On his scheduled meeting with Home Minister Syed Hamid Syed Albar regarding the Hindraf five this evening, Samy Vellu said he would explain to the minister why the detainees must be freed.

"I will also tell him how their families feel about it. As far as I am concerned matters are settling. The elections are over. Now, I think they should be given their freedom," he added.

Asked what his next move would be if the government does not free the detainees, Samy Vellu replied: "I will continuously pressure the government because I am not part of the government now."

The 72-year-old MIC president and former works minister was among the casualties of the March 8 polls. The party was defeated in 18 of its 28 seats.

Towards the end of the press conference, Samy Vellu was asked if Mahathir's incessant attacks against Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would weaken the Barisan Nasional further.

However, the veteran politician refused to be drawn into this. "I have already told you I will

not talk anything about Mahathir. I will stick to it."

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