

MIC boss : I saw it coming
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RK Anand

MIC was dealt an unmerciful blow in the March 8 general election. The Indian-based party was trounced in 18 of its 28 seats and the list of casualties included almost all of its top leaders. MCPX

samy vellu interview 160408 03Even its mighty president was shown the exit in his stronghold of three decades. Morale sank to an all-time low and the grassroots were left wondering about their future.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini at the MIC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, S Samy Vellu - who appears to have retained his vigor despite the major setback - revealed that he saw this coming.

When asked if he was a contributing factor to the poor performance of the party in the elections, the 72-year-old politician refused to accept responsibility and pointed the finger at the government instead.

"I will never say that I am a factor for the losses. I know why the losses took place. It is something due to the neglect of the Indian community by the government."

"I have been continuously fighting (against this) and I foresaw that this was going to happen. Six months before the elections, I went to the prime minister and told him 'I have a short programme for the next three years. Can you give some money so that we can boost the morale of the party among the Indians.'

pak lah abdullah ahmad badawi putrajaya malaysia"First he said, 'I'll look into it', later he said, 'No', he cannot give. So thereafter I thought, 'What can we do?'"

According to Samy Vellu what transpired on March 8 was nothing short of a political tsunami, or in his words, "A big wave of change."

The MIC president said Malaysians desired for this wave to sweep across the country and they believed that the opposition will be able to deliver it.

"Now they are waiting to see what the opposition can give. But I feel that the opposition has not settled in yet, they are still in a lot of disarray. I don't know how long it will take for them to settle (in)."

Not running away

Soon after the elections, calls for the MIC president to vacate his post rang out from both within and outside the party. But a defiant Samy Vellu announced that he will continue to helm MIC until 2012.

This drew more flak from critics, with some even suggesting that the party is now beyond redemption.

samy vellu interview 160408 01Samy Vellu - who has been the target of much criticism - is of the belief that one of the traits of a true leader is not to forsake the party in times of crisis.

"I know that after the elections, our party is in disarray. A leader who runs away when the party is in disarray is no leader," he said.

The former works minister also stressed that it is the duty of a leader to put the house in order and examine what went wrong.

"To put the house in order not only with the (MIC) members but also with the community. If I don't do that, I don't think it will be good," he added.

Samy Vellu also described himself as the strongest link between the party and the masses.

"Because in this party, I have more connections with the ordinary people than anyone else. I see them weekly, I see them daily and I have been attending to their problems.

"I make myself completely available to their requests ... I always tell that we need to see more people. We want to make MIC a people-friendly party that will help the people."

In order to achieve this, Samy Vellu said, the party must have experienced leaders at the controls until as and when the younger leaders are ready to take over the reins.

More relevant now

The MIC president also dismissed the notion that the longer he remains at the top, the more problems it will create for the party at the bottom.

indian crowd malaysia 291107To his critics, he said: "These are (the views of) people who don't know politics, who do not understand the system of politics and also the minds of the people and what happens in the country.

"Anybody who says that, I will say he is a political zero," he added with his usual zest.

Contrary to many quarters suggesting otherwise, Samy Vellu is also confident that the party - which he has spearheaded for 28 years - can be revived and will remain relevant.

"I think after this elections, MIC has become more relevant for the reason that there are many people who need help. There are many people who feel that MIC is the only party that can really help them.

"After I took over the leadership of MIC, I made it a party open to ordinary people. So the ordinary people always felt that coming to MIC means that their going to their own home.

"The ones who say it (MIC) is irrelevant are the people who want to make it irrelevant but are not successful in doing this," he said.