

**But Samy says it's Khir's fault**  
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MIC president S Samy Vellu today refuted ex-Selangor menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo's MCPX claim that the former had asked for the demolition of a Hindu temple in Kampung Rimba Jaya, Shah Alam.

samy vellu interview 160408 03Speaking to Malaysiakini, Samy Vellu said former MIC state exco Kamala Ganapathy had been in discussion with Khir over the proposed demolition of the temple.

"She had asked him many times not to demolish the temple, but he (Khir) kept saying that a court order had been obtained.

"But this court order was obtained three years ago and it was for the demolition of Kampung Karupiah and not the temple. We don't know why he (Khir) was so keen in wanting to help the developer clear the land," he said.

Samy Vellu also pointed out that during the demolition exercise, enforcement officers had only targeted the temple and not the houses.

"This showed their hatred for the temple," he stressed.

The MIC president also disclosed that he telephoned Khir several times and politely asked him not to demolish the temple since it was Deepavali time.

"But he kept saying that a court order had been obtained. So I thought this man is not going to listen and I decided to locate the PM (Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi).

"I first called the DPM (Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak) and then the PM's Office. They told me that PM was attending a function at the Blue Wave Hotel in Shah Alam (where Khir was also present).

"I rushed to the place and told the PM that something urgent must be done about the demolition of the temple. I asked Khir in front of the PM, 'Can you please stop the demolition?' But he cited the court order again."

Asked why the former menteri besar was so adamant in wanting to demolish the temple, Samy Vellu said that Khir "wanted to prove a point."

He said when Abdullah had asked Khir about the matter, the latter once again cited the court order as an excuse.

**Officers brought from all over**

The MIC president also noted that enforcement officers were brought in from all over the state for the operation. "This shows they were determined (to demolish the temple)."

"In other places, he (Khir) gave land for temples. But in this particular instance, I don't

know what his intentions were."

Samy Vellu said Abdullah had then told him to go and tell the people that they would be given a two-day grace period but it was too late.

rimba jaya temple 021107 back portion "When I went there, the temple wall was already demolished and the deities had been removed. It looked as if it was a witch-hunt," he added.

Earlier, Samy Vellu said he was surprised by Khir's statement.

"I am surprised by his statement. How can I tell him to demolish a temple which was already demolished?" he asked.

"It was under his order that more than 500 enforcement personnel from the local authorities from various districts came to demolish just one temple.

"If all local authorities were to send enforcement officers to Shah Alam, who could have given such a directive except him," he said.

"I told him 'You are not only destroying your political career, you will also destroy my political career if you continue with the demolition'.

"He just said 'no, no such thing'."

### **Stop talking about this**

In a statement on the same issue, Samy Vellu also said that Khir had to assume the blame for having turned away Indian voters to the opposition in the state.

"My request to him is stop talking about all this and let us rebuild the Barisan Nasional and the component parties to get back the support of the people," he said.

He said he had great respect for Khir's ability as a leader who had turned around Selangor as a major developing state.

Samy Vellu's clarification indicated that the controversial demolition took place just days before Deepavali which fell on Nov 8 last year.

khir toyo interview 280408 04 However, Khir told Malaysiakini in an interview that he was not the culprit behind the demolition as he was instructed by Samy Vellu on Nov 15 to tear down the temple. He also said that he had ordered for the demolition work to stop on Oct 30.

"Samy Vellu called me on the night of Nov 15 and told me that Hindraf (Hindu Rights Action Force) people had infiltrated the temple and that it must be demolished that night itself," he alleged.

Khir also denied that the temple was torn down before Deepavali, saying the exercise had been carried out a week after the Hindu festival.

Furthermore, he said an agreement had been concluded with the priest, in that a

compensation of RM40,000 would be paid and an alternative site provided to rebuild the temple.

Khair also said that he had agreed to stop the demolition exercise after Samy Vellu met up with him at the Blue Wave hotel.

"Samy Vellu then met me and (premier) Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Blue Wave hotel and we all agreed to stop the demolition process at the temple gate. Samy then made an announcement in Rimba Jaya (asking) not to demolish the temple because in two days, the people would evacuate the site," he said.

The demolition of the Sri Maha Mariamman temple was carried out in two stages. As the illegal extension was being pulled down on Oct 30, a fracas ensued between devotees and enforcement personnel. This forced the operation to be aborted

The original 100-year-old structure was demolished later - apparently on Nov 15 based on Khair's account during the interview.

### **Say it to our faces**

MIC information chief M Saravanan was also shocked by Khair's accusation against the MIC president.

m saravanan mic info chief "This is news to all of us. I am shocked by Khair's remarks. I issue an open challenge to him to face us and tell us this to our faces," he told Malaysiakini.

Saravanan, who is also federal territories deputy minister, said he was with Samy Vellu when the latter met Khair at the Blue Wave hotel and had personally witnessed the former MB's refusal to stop the demolition.

"How can he say now that he had stopped the demolition on Oct 30 and only proceeded to tear down the temple after receiving a call on Nov 15?"

"For us, he is clearly not telling the truth. We tried hard to save the temple but he was in no mood to listen to us. We told him that he would be angering the Indian community by doing so but he paid no heed," he added.

Saravanan said that the demolition of the Shah Alam temple was among the main reasons why BN lost Selangor in the March 8 general election.

"He was arrogant and didn't bother to listen to anyone. Now he is trying to pass off as a leader who did all the right things for his people."

The FT MIC chief also said that on Oct 30 Khair had issued a press statement that the temple was being demolished due to a court order.

"Why didn't he tell about Samy Vellu's involvement then? As it is he has already ordered for the demolition of the temple right before Deepavali and is now trying to blame others when he should be blaming himself," said Saravanan.

The temple demolition has been cited by both opposition and BN members as a key factor in influencing the outcome of the March 8 polls.

The anger of the voters over this and other issues saw the state government falling into opposition hands for the first time in history. Khir then resigned as Selangor Umno head and is now leader of the opposition in the state legislature.

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