

**Samy hits out at Dr M, Utusan
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MIC president S Samy Vellu today lashed out at former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Umno-owned *Utusan Malaysia* daily for interfering in his party polls.

In a brief exclusive interview with *Malaysiakini*, the 73-year-old president said it was the 84-year-old statesman who excelled in the art of 'destroying deputies'.

Samy Vellu said while he had one deputy for 25 years, Mahathir had four during his 22-year tenure.

This is the first time Samy Vellu had openly criticised the former Umno president despite the latter's negative comments about him in the past.

He was responding to an article published in Tamil daily *Makkal Osai* yesterday which quoted Mahathir expressing support for the MIC supremo's arch nemesis S Subramaniam.

The daily is linked to Subramaniam, who is attempting to reclaim his deputy president post which he lost to incumbent G Palanivel in 2006. The party elections is tomorrow.

'He sat beside me for 25 years'

Samy Vellu said he was tickled by Mahathir's accusation that he had never allowed any other leader in his party to grow.

"When I took over the presidency, there was one man who sat there for 25 years next to me. (It was) none other than the same Subramaniam.

"If I would finish people with a vengeance (as alleged by Mahathir), I don't think he would have been there for 25 years," he added.

The veteran MIC president also disagreed with Mahathir's accusation that he never groomed leaders in the party.

"I only had two leaders (as deputy president) during my total period of 29 years (as president). Ninety percent of the time, it was Subramaniam and he is still not satisfied.

"He is not happy about they way we treated him like a Maharaja. He was really like a prince in MIC. The latest... three years Palanivel was there," he said.

'Master of destroying deputies'

However, Samy Vellu pointed out that there was a trail of destruction in terms of deputies when it came to Mahathir's track record.

Apart from his three deputies who were given the boot, the former premier was also credited with playing a pivotal role in engineering the downfall of his fourth deputy Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who succeeded him in 2003 and vacated the post this year.

"Look at the history of Mahathir. Who was his first deputy... Musa Hitam. What happened to

Musa? I know the story as I was in the cabinet," said Samy Vellu.

"After that (it) was Ghafar Baba. What happened to Ghafar Baba? A man who was a nationalist was thrown out of the cabinet just like that," he added.

"The third Anwar Ibrahim, there was a time when Mahathir said Anwar is the only man who can control the country... He praised him so much. But what happened to Anwar?"

"Who really destroyed the deputies? He is a master in destroying his deputies. I don't destroy any deputies, they stayed there for such a long time," he stressed.

In the past, Samy Vellu said that he bit his tongue out of respect when Mahathir criticised him.

"I still consider him as a great leader and a builder of a modern nation. So I didn't want to make any unnecessary comments about him even though when I stood for elections (last year), he said don't vote for Samy Vellu.

"I would have trashed him. I am not afraid of anybody... man lives once and he dies once. It doesn't matter, I am prepared for anything," he added.

Was Umno behind it?

As for *Utusan*, Samy Vellu labelled the Malay daily as a 'racist' publication which went against the 1Malaysia concept espoused by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

The daily had carried a report on its front-page today quoting political analysts saying that Samy Vellu should quit.

Although the MIC president said he did not know if the Umno leadership was behind the report in an attempt to sway votes in the party elections, observers claim that the agenda was obvious.

"I don't know how much of Umno's intervention is involved. But it is usual for *Utusan* to act like the big brother and hit everyone flat and they feel happy about it...," said Samy Vellu.

"I don't know if this Umno leadership would stoop down to this level (of masterminding such a report)... in any case, whatever *Utusan* has done is not going to disturb us," he added.

Samy Vellu stressed that MIC members and the Indian community do not believe the news that appear in the daily.

"I give you an example, the cow-head incident, we all condemned the demonstration thinking that it will bring about racial misunderstanding and brew trouble in the country

"But that news, they don't carry. They carry news in support of the cow-head demonstration, they are determined to do something that is (detrimental) to others rather than what is true," he said.

"Secondly, as and when you give them some news, the news must be to their taste and not the truth, then only they will publish.

"Nowadays, I don't call their reporters anymore because we feel it is sort of a very racial paper which does not contribute to national interests," he added.

'Hydrogen bomb'

Samy Vellu was also asked to comment on whether a MIC leader who came into power riding on the support of Umno would be subservient to that party and not be effective in defending the Indian community.

Training his guns on Subramaniam, the president said: "He is already subservient to Mahathir, I don't know to what extent he is subservient to Umno... he needs somebody to push him forward. He can't stand on his own legs."

"Is this the type of leadership that the Indian community needs... a community that is suffering from poverty and just attempting to come up... it needs a leader who can talk and bring about change," he added.

Asked on the 'hydrogen bomb' (damning evidence) which he claims to have against Subramaniam, Samy Vellu said: "He actually thought he is blasting a hydrogen bomb... he comes out with this and that about Samy Vellu.

"I have got many things about Subramaniam. If I detonate that, it will become a hydrogen bomb... how irresponsible he behaved when he was in government positions," he added.

On why he had not detonated the bomb as yet, Samy Vellu said: "I don't want to do that ... unless it is extremely necessary."