

Slipper garland for Dr M: MIC delegate suspended
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MIC today suspended a party delegate who had suggested that a 'garland of slippers' be placed on the portrait of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Party president S Samy Vellu said he decided to suspend the unnamed delegate with immediate effect pending the recommendations by the party's disciplinary committee.

Samy Vellu had said yesterday that the delegate will face disciplinary action for his remark.

Samy Vellu and his party had come under tremendous pressure from Umno and *Utusan Malaysia* over that remark which was made on Sunday at MIC's annual general meeting.

"I hope that with this decision the issue will be settled," Samy Vellu said in a statement.

"I have also discussed this matter with other senior leaders of MIC and they have agreed with the suspension," he added.

Yesterday Samy Vellu said that he regretted the statement made by the delegate and would ask the delegate concerned to give an explanation to the party's disciplinary committee.

The veteran party leader also pointed out that he had asked the delegate concerned to end his speech immediately after making the statement on the 'garland of slippers', but his instruction was not reported by the media.

Samy defended Mahathir

He added that he had informed the MIC delegates to give the highest respect to Mahathir who had done a lot for the country.

"I realise that Dr Mahathir's statement on the MIC had offended many delegates but there was no necessity to criticise him in such a manner," he said.

Samy Vellu said he respected the delegates' freedom to debate on any issue but when it touched on a national leader, he had to intervene.

Mahathir had given his views on the MIC, Samy Vellu and the decision of former MIC deputy president S Subramaniam to contest the post of deputy president at the MIC general assembly held on Saturday and Sunday, which had angered several MIC members.

The delegate's remark against Mahathir brought the wrath of Umno, Utusan Malaysia and several other organisations who such an act as excessive and rude.

Umno Youth vice-head Razali Ibrahim said such an act was not part of the Barisan Nasional culture and that the MIC should be responsible and take appropriate action. Others had even called for MIC to be expelled from BN.

Makkal Osai is to be blamed

In another development, MIC Youth wing advisor S Vell Paari said MIC was the wrong party

to be blamed for the whole 'Mahathir-bashing' fiasco.

He said that blame should be apportioned to Tamil daily *Makkal Osai* which first published an exclusive interview with Mahathir two days before the party polls.

The interview, in which Mahathir was reported to have criticised Samy Vellu and promoted former deputy president S Subramaniam as a better leader, caused much anger among the party delegates, said Vell Paari, who is Samy Vellu's son.

"What people don't realise is that the fact that *Makkal Osai* had manipulated the Mahathir 'interview'," he charged.

He said that the views expressed by Mahathir in the daily were opinions shared by the former prime minister with the daily during a meeting on another matter sometime in June.

"They kept Mahathir's views on MIC for almost three months and then published it just before the party polls as though it was an exclusive interview by Mahathir to support Subramaniam in his race to become the deputy president," he added.

"In reality, the anger shown by MIC delegates at Mahathir was a result of the spin published by *Makkal Osai*.

"This was a political conspiracy undertaken by the daily to ensure Subramaniam won the election but they failed to realise that they have put an innocent Mahathir on the firing spot," he added.

Vell Paari also quickly noted that he was not defending the delegate who had insulted Mahathir, stating that proper action will be taken against the delegate.

"At the same time Umno and the government must also take *Makkal Osai* to task for its role in this entire fiasco," he said.

Makkal Osai is linked to Subramaniam and had campaigned for him in the run up to the party polls. Subramaniam however failed to dislodge incumbent deputy president and Samy Vellu's candidate G Palanivel.

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