

Dr M on winning party polls, losing people's faith
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Four days after MIC president S Samy Vellu's men made an almost clean sweep in the Sept 12 party polls, former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad penned a new entry for his blog.

Although he did not make any direct references to his long-time friend, it appeared that the 84-year-old statesman's stinging remarks were pointing in the direction of the 73-year-old president.

Mahathir, who retained Samy Vellu in the cabinet throughout his 22-year tenure as prime minister, said there were some politicians who felt that by being president of their party, it would guarantee victory in the general election.

"So they work towards ensuring victory (in the party) by getting rid of members who do not support them, use money to buy support or use whatever power they have to bribe, make promises and even threats.

"The end result is that they win. But the people are watching. When the people see that the party's struggle is no longer about them, when they see that corruption and intimidation decide the leadership, their faith in the party will erode and eventually disappear," he added.

Mahathir was unwittingly dragged into the MIC fray when his criticisms against Samy Vellu made during an interview several months ago appeared on the front-page of a Tamil daily linked to the president's nemesis S Subramaniam just 48 hours before the party polls.

This prompted Samy Vellu to launch a scathing counter attack the next day, where he zeroed in on the former premier's destruction-laden track record of deposing deputies.

Later that night, Mahathir reiterated his criticism, and pinned the blame on Samy Vellu for the Indian community voting for the opposition in the last general election. Twenty-four hours later, his protege and current premier Najib Abdul Razak delivered another blow to the MIC president when he stressed on the importance of leaders having to be popular in their respective communities, and not just their parties.

What left Samy Vellu seething with anger was that the premier's remark was made at the MIC annual meet, shortly before the party delegates were scheduled to cast their ballots.

Same old practice

Meanwhile, Mahathir said in his blog that the people, after observing these transgressions, would stamp their disapproval during the general election.

"And this is what happened during the 12th general election last year. Have the leaders taken notice of the people's disappointment? Until now, it does not appear so," he added.

Those who clamor for positions, he said, still used the same old tactics and the party cannot be cleansed.

"Those who practice money politics are accepted and given a place. Ordinary members also do not protest against this.

"In fact, many feel that there is nothing wrong with investing money since they can get a little reward," he added.

Mahathir pointed out that when the voters 'despise' the party because of money politics, foolish arrogance, and unkept promises of development, money politics would no longer be effective.

"Remember when the vote majority is small, losing support among a small number of people could cause defeat," he said.

In an earlier posting on Sept 11, Mahathir warned that a similar fate that befell the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan could come knocking on Barisan Nasional's door.

"That the rot has set in there can be no doubt. Corruption is now rampant in Umno and the other component parties," he said.

In what could be construed as another swipe at Samy Vellu, Mahathir added: "Power struggles have emasculated them. Leaders have a strong desire to stay in office even though they have outlived their usefulness."

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