

Samy Vellu - MIC's longest serving president
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PEOPLE IT is difficult to interpret S. Samy Vellu's calmness and smile when he announced his resignation as MIC president after holding the reins for more than three decades.

The 74-year-old politician looked cheerful and occasionally laughs when taking questions from the media, who crowded the party's headquarters here, after the longest serving MIC president chaired the Central Working Committee meeting, which lasted more than three hours, for the last time Monday.

Although his term as MIC president expires in March 2012, Samy Vellu, who was former works minister, decided to make way for his deputy, G. Palanivel to give him adequate time to prepare for the 13th general election.

Samy Vellu was appointed MIC acting president following the death of his predecessor, Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam on Sept 13, 1979 at the time when Tun Hussein Onn was the third prime minister.

Samy Vellu outlasted other Barisan Nasional leaders. His contemporaries, Dr Lim Keng Yaik helmed Gerakan for 26 years (1980-2007), Dr Mahathir Mohamad spearheaded Umno for 21 years (1981-2002), and Dr Ling Liong Sik led the MCA for 16 years (1987-2003).

Samy Vellu, who once acted in a Tamil drama, "Natpu" in 1954 and became a television news presenter in 1964, plunged into politics in 1959 by becoming an MIC Batu Caves branch member and secretary.

He was voted as the MIC Youth chief in 1971, MIC vice-president (1975), MIC deputy president (1977) and finally president in 1981 after acting in that capacity since the death of Manickavasagam in 1979.

Samy Vellu was nominated for the first time to contest the Sungai Siput parliamentary seat in the 1974 general election and held the seat until the 2008 general election when he was defeated by Dr. Michael Jeyakumar Devaraj of Parti Sosialis Malaysia, who contested on the DAP ticket, by 1,821 vote-majority.

Samy Vellu was appointed deputy housing and local government minister in 1978 before becoming works minister from 1979 to 1989, and from 1995 to 2008.

He became energy, telecommunications and post minister from 1989 to 1995 which culminated in the privatisation of the Telecommunications Department, National Electricity Board and the Postal Department.

He had contributed to the idea of Malaysia having its own satellite which was eventually launched in 1995.

During his tenure as works minister, Samy Vellu played a key role in developing the country's road network and transportation system for which he was awarded the 'International Man of the Year Award by the International Road Federation in 1987.

He was instrumental in the construction of the North-South Expressway and the Penang Bridge.

Samy Vellu received numerous awards abroad including the Gwang Hwa Medal from South Korea, the Grand Officer of the Order of the Merit from Italy and the Bharatiya Samman award from the then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpaye for the Indian diasporas contributions in 2003.

He was a great help to the Indian community in the field of education, economy, social and religion.

In education, he was the prime mover in the formation Maju Institute of Educational Development (MIED), which has so far provided grants and loans for 14,600 students to pursue medical, engineering, economics and information technology degrees.

He also played a vital role in the establishment of Tafe College in Seremban, the Institute of Medicine, Science and Technology (AIMST), and Koperasi Didik.

Samy Vellu was also involved in the setting up of Maika Holdings and the Workers Housing Cooperative Society, the Social Strategic Foundation (YSS) and the Social Rehabilitation Foundation. - Bernama

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