

DATE: 19/9/2009

Dr M labels Samy Vellu a liability

NST-19/9/2009

PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu should resign as MIC chief as he will become a liability to Barisan Nasional in the next general election if he stays, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The former prime minister said the party chief of 29 years had to go as he had to take responsibility for the party's failure in last year's general election and for his own defeat in the polls.

He said Samy Vellu's leadership of the MIC had failed and that people's support for BN would erode if he remained in power.

"If we look at other countries, whenever a leader fails, he resigns. In Japan, he commits hara-kiri. We're not asking him (Samy Vellu) to commit hara-kiri.

"You (Samy Vellu) have failed to lead the MIC until you yourself lost," he said in an interview with Bernama.

Citing the example of former prime minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who resigned after his poor performance at the March 8 general election last year, Dr Mahathir said: "Samy Vellu performed worse than Pak Lah (Abdullah) but he still does not want to relinquish the post. He should have resigned before things got to this stage."

He urged BN leaders to admonish Samy Vellu as they were responsible not only for the performance of their parties but also that of BN as a whole.

"If I know that a person will cause BN to lose, then it is already a BN problem and no

longer an MIC problem. We cannot keep saying don't interfere. This is a BN affair. Because of him, BN lost.

"Previously, there was no Hindraf. Now there are scores (of pressure groups from the Indian community). It's him that the people don't want but he still wants to be president."

He said he had a right to criticise anyone for the sake of BN.

Dr Mahathir's criticism of Samy Vellu before the MIC elections last week was seen as an attempt to interfere in MIC's affairs.

This raised the ire of Paya Besar deputy division chief M. Sukumaran, who suggested that a garland of slippers be placed on Dr Mahathir's portrait.

Dr Mahathir said leaders

should realise that the post they held was not for life.

"This is not directed at Samy Vellu alone because there are others who are like him."

He said he had wanted to resign in 1998 but because of the economic slowdown and the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue, he had to continue leading the nation until 2003.

"I resigned not when people criticised me. I resigned because I had stayed too long. Malaysian leaders still do not understand that when they fail, they should resign on their own volition.

"No need for others to tell them. When you fail, your party fails. You are responsible."

Asked what BN should do in view of its principle of not interfering in the affairs of component parties, he said the

coalition had to intervene when the party concerned became a liability to BN.

He said leaders who resorted to money, pressure, abuse of power and threats could remain as party presidents but would not win elections.

On Samy Vellu's hand-picked leaders winning in the party elections last week, Dr Mahathir said they could win party elections but would lose in general elections because the people would not support them.

He also criticised Samy Vellu for not doing anything to stop the building of temples without approval despite promising to do so.

He said Samy Vellu became popular because he (Tun Dr Mahathir) had helped him.

"(When) he wanted to build

a university, I persuaded the government to give a RM50 million allocation and I've helped in many more of his projects."

Reflecting on his days as prime minister, Dr Mahathir said he had to persuade the Malays to allow BN to place MIC candidates in Malay-majority areas because no constituency in the country had an Indian majority.

"I also strove to get Malay support for MIC candidates. Without support from Umno members and the other Malays, the MIC could not win. So that's my service to the MIC.

"But when the MIC does something that will cause it to lose the support of the Indians, Chinese and Malays, I have to criticise." — Bernama