

**Dr M: Not grudge but a matter of BN's strength**  
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**By ALANG BENDAHARA | PUTRAJAYA**

**SURPRISED: Former prime minister refutes Samy Vellu's claim of personal animosity**

TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he did not hold any personal grudge against former MIC president, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

The former prime minister said history showed that he never kept any grudges against anybody.

Samy Vellu, in an interview with the New Sunday Times, had stated that Dr Mahathir had sabotaged his chance of winning the Sungai Siput parliamentary seat in the 2008 general election.

A composed Dr Mahathir told a press conference at the Perdana Leadership Foundation yesterday, that Samy Vellu's claims were not true.

"It is not true, I never said no to vote for Samy Vellu. In 2008, you must remember that it was not only Samy Vellu but a lot of people also lost in the elections."

Dr Mahathir added that his criticism against the leadership of former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi "had affected the thinking of voters and because of that, they did not support the Barisan Nasional, and along with it, Samy Vellu".

"That was the situation then, it was not a matter of grudge but rather a question concerning the strengths of BN and BN component parties."

Dr Mahathir also said the issues surrounding Samy Vellu was the way he handled the party (MIC).

"I was very unhappy that he kept on removing people who had the potential to take over from him. All of them were removed, including Datuk S. Subramaniam, Datuk K. Pathmanathan and Tan Sri M. G. Pandithan."

As a result, Dr Mahathir said MIC shrunk and could not grow "as its members were taken away and those who did so formed their own party like what Pandithan did".

The late Pandithan formed the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) after leaving MIC. He also refuted Samy Vellu's claim that the root of their rift was because Samy Vellu had voted against him by stopping the admission of IPF into BN.

"I thought in order to strengthen the Indian community, it was good to bring Pandithan in. My thinking was not on Pandithan. I was worried that if we stopped the entry of a party with huge followers, we would lose the support of the followers.

"The Indian community is small, thus even when a small number left, it would still have a huge impact. But Samy Vellu was vehemently against it and there was nothing I could do. As a result, MIC became weaker."

Dr Mahathir also said there would always be challenges in running a party "but if you deal with challenges by merely expelling the followers, that will weaken the party".

Dr Mahathir just chuckled when asked on Samy Vellu's revelation that when both of them meet, they would just shake hands.

"We all must accept that there will come a time when we must go and surrender our place to other people. You can't hold on to your position forever.

"You must be able to read the sentiments of the people to see if you are no longer required by your party."

Dr Mahathir said he was puzzled why the issue of grudge was brought up by Samy Vellu.

"I am a bit surprised why the NST should give prominence to what he said as we all are has-beens ... he is finished and I am finished, what is there to tell? I think there is no need for it.

"Yet, I am thankful for the rest of the interview when Samy Vellu said great things on this and that, and I am fine with that."

On his observation of MIC now, he said: "I think MIC today is much stronger as many people are coming back.

"Some of those who were unhappy with Samy Vellu are coming back and I hope that MIC will regain its strength."

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