

Dr M: Samy Vellu defeat was collateral damage, not personal
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PUTRAJAYA, April 9 — Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's loss in Election 2008 was the collateral damage of a campaign against Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and not the result of a "personal grudge", Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in a Bernama Online report today.

"I did not tell the people in Sungai Siput not to vote for Samy, but my criticism of the leadership of Pak Lah (Abdullah) affected the thinking of lots of voters, and because of that, they did not support Barisan Nasional (BN) and along with it, of course, Samy," Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying in the report.

"That was the situation. It is not a question of grudge. It is a question concerning the strength of BN and its component parties."

Yesterday, Samy Vellu blamed Dr Mahathir for his Election 2008 defeat, and accused the former prime minister of sabotaging his political chances.

"Dr Mahathir, prior to the (2008) election, told the people 'Don't vote for Samy Vellu,'" the former MIC president said in a New Sunday Times report.

"You see, there are reasons he (Dr Mahathir) felt hurt. He wanted to bring the IPF (Indian Progressive Front), (the late Tan Sri M.G) Pandithan's party into Barisan Nasional. Everybody (other BN component party leaders) agreed (but), I said no," Samy Vellu said.

Today, the Dr Mahathir pointed out that Samy Vellu's was not the only BN reversal in 2008 and noted that the coalition saw defeat in many areas as a result of the so-called political tsunami then.

"In 2008, it is not only Samy Vellu who lost, but a lot of people (also) lost," he said.

Despite denying the grudge, Dr Mahathir appeared to agree with Samy Vellu's suggestion that the acrimony between the two veterans traced back to MIC's rejection of IPF's entry into BN.

"Everytime he (Samy Vellu) sees somebody who has potential, he makes sure they are removed. When you remove the leader, it is not (that) one person who goes off but he takes away his supporters (as well), and as a result, the MIC shrinks," he continued.

"We have to have total agreement in BN before we can admit any new party. So, there was nothing I could do about it. As a result, I think MIC became weaker."