

## Poll-eve charges before Malaysian Indian Congress meet

Aspirants for Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) party posts are trading charges on the eve of the party's plenary meeting Saturday.

S. Subramaniam, a former MIC deputy president who wants to recapture the post, Friday dismissed an allegation by the party chief and old rival S. Samy Vellu that he was banking on 'external influence' to canvas for votes, NST Online reported.

The charge related to his being praised by the country's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad and published by a Tamil online news portal.

'He (Samy Vellu) gets upset whenever somebody praises me... everyone has the right to speak,' Subramaniam told reporters after attending a gathering with about 900 members and delegates of the MIC's Klang Division in Selangor state.

MIC speaks for the nearly two million ethnic Indian community.

In a statement later published on the portal, Vellu was reported as saying that Subramaniam had lost whatever credibility that was left in him by seeking the help of people outside the MIC.

'Subramaniam is so desperate that he has to seek the mandate from Mahathir to win in the party elections. He has brought shame to the MIC members and the party,' Vellu was quoted as saying.

Subramaniam said Mahathir spoke his mind without fear or favour and the paper just published what he had said.

'I had nothing to do with it. I am grateful to him (Mahathir) because he had said something nice about me,' he said.

Subramaniam is challenging incumbent deputy president G. Palanivel who is on Vellu's 'official' list of candidates.

Another candidate for the post is vice-president S. Sothinathan.

Vellu has expressed his displeasure at this candidature and has snapped all political ties with his one-time protege, media reports have said.

A political analyst from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Sivamurugan Pandian, told official Bernama news agency that the chances were there for Subramaniam to get sympathy votes in the party elections following the decision of the MIC Central Working Committee (CWC) to refer Subramaniam to the disciplinary committee.

While Vellu has been re-elected for a 11th term, the 1,500-plus delegates will vote in the MIC's poll Saturday for the other posts.

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