

15/02/2000

Six may seek MIC veep post

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Six senior MIC leaders are believed to be preparing to challenge two incumbent party vice-presidents at the party election in May.

They are planning to take on Deputy Rural Development Minister Datuk G. Palanivel and former Negri Sembilan State Exco member Datuk M. Muthupalaniappan who were elected at the last polls in 1997.

Sources said the third incumbent, former Deputy Rural Development Minister Datuk K. Kumaran, may not defend his post.

The challengers are believed to be State Assemblyman for Lunas Dr Joe Fernandez, National Unity and Social Development Ministry parliamentary secretary P. Veerasingam, MIC secretary-general and Subang Jaya MP Tan Sri K.S. Nijhar, Johor exco member Datuk K.S. Balakrishnan, MIC central working committee member Datuk V.K.K. Teagarajan and SiRusa State Assemblyman G. Yogavel.

Dr Fernandez, Veerasingam, Balakrishnan and Teagarajan are CWC members while Yogavel came out last in the race for the vice-presidency in the last polls.

The two-day general assembly will be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on May 27.

Branch-level meetings which began yesterday have to be completed before the end of the month after which divisional meetings will be held from March 12 until the end of next month.

Under the party constitution, those interested in contesting must be delegates of the general assembly.

These delegates who are elected during division meetings must fill up their nomination forms backed by a proposer and five seconders. This has to be done at party headquarters in May.

So far, only Muthupalaniappan, who was first elected in 1997, has openly expressed interest in defending his post while Kumaran and Palanivel have been silent on the matter.

The sources said Palanivel, who received the highest number votes in 1997, was most likely to defend his post while Kumaran was said to be considering his position.

The sources said while party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu would most likely be unchallenged, there was a chance of deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam being challenged.

"It is rather early to say anything but we cannot rule out the possibility of a contest for the deputy presidency," a source said, referring to Subramaniam.

It is understood that some within the party are thinking of Palanivel as a candidate for the post.

A similar situation was predicted during the 1997 election but Subramaniam went on to defend his position unopposed.

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