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MIC-Constitution

THREE CRITERIA FOR MIC MEMBER TO CONTEST PARTY PRESIDENCY

By: S. Retnanathan

KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 (Bernama) -- An MIC member who wish to have a shot at the party president's "throne" needs to fulfil three criteria before he can be given a chance to contest the party's top post.

The aspirant must firstly be a party member for at least 10 years and secondly, he must be a branch chairman.

But thirdly, the most important and hardest to meet, is that he must get 300 other branch chairmen to sign his nomination paper for the party president's post.

These are the three vital conditions which will apply to any aspirant for the MIC top post once the party amends section 58 of its constitution at the two-day MIC annual general assembly which begins on May 18.

MIC Constitution Amendment Committee head Tan Sri M. Mahalingam, in revealing the details, said that the party presidential aspirant, apart from being a member of 10 years' standing and a branch chairman, needs also to obtain 50 nominations to contest for the president's post.

Each nomination must be signed by six MIC branch chairmen (one proposer and five seconders). And it will not take a genius to figure out that for 50 nominations, the aspirant must have 300 branch chairmen backing him.

"Each nomination paper should have one proposer and five seconders and all of them should be branch chairmen. So, for 50 nominations there should be 300 branch chairmen signing the nomination papers and if you consider the 4,500 branch chairmen (the total number of branches in the MIC) to the 300 signatures needed, I would say it is not much...it does not even constitute 10 per cent of the total.

"We set the 50-nomination requirement as we do not want the system to be abused and furthermore, if a branch chairman can muster 300 signatures, then he should be considered a leader and be given a chance to have a shot at the president's post," he told Bernama in an interview.

He said that following the amendment to the party constitution, the 4,500 branch chairmen in the party would also be given an opportunity to cast their ballots in picking the MIC's top leader.

On the need for a branch chairman to be a member of 10 years' standing, he said that the condition is to ensure that the candidate is not someone new in the party "just wanting to challenge for the sake of a fight or he just does not like Samy Vellu (MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu)".

He said that the amendment, which would take effect next year, being a party election year, would provide for the election for the president's post to be held three months prior to the MIC AGM.

"When the president's election is held before the AGM, it will give the elected president renewed mandate at the AGM...this is the reason why we are pushing the president's election a bit earlier than the assembly," he said.

Mahalingam also said that the presidential election would be handled by an Election Steering Committee, comprising MIC Central Working Committee members, guided by the party's election by-laws.

This year's MIC AGM will be different as the tabling of the resolutions, passing of the annual report and the constitution amendment will take place on the first day while debates on the presidential address will be held the following day.

The change is to ensure the attendence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, at the AGM to be held

at the Selangor State Secretariat building in Shah Alam.

Dr Mahathir, who is expected to officially open the AGM on the second day, is only scheduled to return home on May 18 from his official visit to the United States.

In the early days after its formation, the MIC, the largest Indian-based political party in the country, allowed all its members to vote to pick its head.

But this changed in the 1960's when the leadership allowed only the party's branch committee members to pick the president. However, this system too was scrapped after it was found that it was time-consuming and that it has been abused in some branches where the branch chairman allegedly dictated who the other committee members should vote.

The MIC then decided to allow only elected division leaders to vote in picking the party president and this has been in practice over the last decade.

Asked why the party was bent on making such a drastic change now, Mahalingam said that the present leadership felt that grassroot leaders had become more distant from the president.

"This change has no political agenda. It is merely a way to get Samy Vellu closer to the branch leaders and for him to hear out their grouses himself," he said.

He said that the amendment would also foster closer relationship between grassroot leaders and the president, now sadly lacking.

Mahalingam said that this year's AGM would see the tabling of only one amendment to the party constitution as the MIC's CWC had decided not to make too many changes to the party rules at one go.

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