

**New MIC president not bothered with 'rivals'**  
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Newly-minted MIC president G Palanivel said that other Indian-based political parties does not pose a threat to MIC because the party is far more established.

"To be very frank we are a very structured party. We are not worried about any form of competition. They are not our competitors, please la," said Palanivel, who is also the deputy minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

Palanivel said this when asked about the MIC's position following the growth of the Human Rights Party (HRP) and Malaysian Makkal Sakti Party (MMSP), during a press conference after chairing his maiden central working committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

HRP is the political arm of the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) famed for organising a mass rally in Nov 2007 to end what it considers marginalisation of the Indian community in Malaysia. On the other hand, MMSP is a Hindraf splinter group that is now aligned to BN.

Palanivel said that despite the emergence of such groups, which have both shown interest in contesting during the general elections, he said that the Indian community will still look to MIC for direction.

"This (MIC) is the mother party of the Indians. I have no doubts about it... They can leave us and run away to (seek) other leadership where the leader is not an Indian (but) all Indians will eventually come to us," he said.

However, he was quick to add that MIC was willing to work with any group, including the HRP and MMSP.

"What I want is a united and common agenda for the Indian community. We don't want to quarrel about the unity of the Indian community. Where we can work together, we will work together.

"I'm prepared to sit and talk to the opposition for the sake of the community I'm willing to do anything. I'm a very inclusive person. I don't want to antagonise anybody," he said.

**'Things have changed'**

Nevertheless, Palanivel said that much has changed for the Indian community since the March 2008 general elections where MIC suffered major losses.

"I must reemphasise to you, that the democracy has matured. People are independent. We are very happy about all that. We are also very happy we (the Indian community) has two speakers (from Pakatan Rakyat and BN) in Perak and a deputy chief minister (in Penang).

"The opposition did change the history of the Indians in this country. I mean I'm not going to deny all those things," said Palanivel.

But he expressed confidence that the Indian community are now more inclined towards the BN due to the popularity of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"We have amicable premier, a government that is willing to support the community. (We are) getting millions for the development of schools, millions of ringgits for development of temples, millions of ringgit for loans," he said.

### **'We're a marginalised community'**

On whether he would be contesting in the next general election, Palanivel was coy and insisted that his immediate priorities lies with the party.

"I want to place my party, my people and my candidates above me that's all this are not important issues for me to decide at the moment.

"I'm quite selfless, not greedy. That decision I will make (later)... I'm eligible for that kind of decision. At the moment that's not my priority," he said.

He urged the public to give him time and he would not be making promises that he can show results in the near future.

"It will take time... I cannot be like the prime minister of the country to prove a miracle in 100 days. I don't have that kind of machinery. I'm a leader of a very small party. I cannot say on what I can deliver in 100 days.

"I'm not a superman and I don't to fly high... I want to keep my feet on the ground. I want to be a practical leader. It's very hard to lead this community because we are a marginalised community... there is no doubt about it," he said.

Palanivel was among the high-profile BN leaders that were routed in the 2008 general elections by losing the Hulu Selangor parliament seat.

However, the BN leadership decided against fielding him again during the Hulu Selangor by-election due to his apparent unpopularity in the area and his candidacy in the next general election is in question.

### **New membership card**

On his immediate priorities, Palanivel said that the party will embark on a campaign to "localise" Indian voters and issuing them new membership cards.

"We want to localise and want to put a great effort in registering new voters. We want to increase the registration of voters campaign to ensure that we target one million Indian voters. That is the first and most important thing that has to take place," he said.

He added that by doing this, MIC will be able to prove to BN that it does have its members and increase its "bargaining power" to ensure that the party does not become "dysfunctional".

"We will be able to call the shots. We can provide proper database," he said explaining that MIC also wants to ensure all its members have membership cards as a form of recognition.

"We want every MIC members to carry his membership card with his photo (and details) in

it and this will be done in stages and processes but it would take some time.

"It gives him what we call recognition as a card carrying member of the party. We are a small community but we want to become a very organized small community," he said.

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