

## **Battle for MIC presidency may fizzle out**

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**By JJ Ray**

The much anticipated contest between G Palanivel and S Subramaniam for the MIC presidency may finally fizzle out, according to MIC sources closely following the developments in the party.

Party insiders said some recent developments in the party may force Subramaniam to rethink and call off his challenge.

NONEThe most important development is that Subramaniam (right) has been receiving insufficient response from MIC branch chairmen during his visits to the states, amidst opposition from state leaderships recently appointed by Palanivel.

MIC leadership in states such as Perak and Penang which are strongly aligned to Palanivel, resisted branch chairmen from attending dinner meetings called by Subramaniam.

Sentiments among branch chairmen also seem to be strong that Subramaniam should not go for a contest since Palanivel has openly declared that he is seeking only one more term.

Many branch chairmen are also of the view that Subramaniam has gained everything politically in a silver platter within a short spell of time and that it is too soon for him to take on Palanivel.

Furthermore, as health minister he is already holding an important portfolio in the Cabinet and therefore, the party's rank and file are of the opinion that there are no justifiable reasons for him to rise up to presidency at this stage, ousting Palanivel.

One MIC division chairman pointed out that it doesn't mean that the branch chairmen are in love with Palanivel either or that he is the best leader to lead the party. But the fact is that they are unable to find compelling reasons to bring Subramaniam as a replacement for Palanivel.

Furthermore, many branch chairmen fear that Subramaniam's victory as president is seen as the return of former president S Samy Vellu, a situation many want to avoid.

Saravanan holds the trump card

saravanan kl draft plan 220808 02MIC sources said there is also another important reason why Subramaniam may not go for the challenge and that is due to the role of party vice-president M Saravanan (right).

Saravanan who has been leading the campaign to oust Palanivel in favour of Subramaniam is currently said to be unhappy about the way Subramaniam is handling his campaign strategies.

Saravanan is under constant attack from Palanivel's supporters who claim that he is instigating a fight between Palanivel and Subramaniam for his own political gains.

The Tamil daily Thinakural has been continuously targeting Saravanan accusing him of creating a presidential contest.

Although Saravanan has categorically denied such accusations saying that Subra has a mind of his own to decide for himself, Saravanan's supporters feel that Subramaniam is not coming to the defence of Saravanan by playing a neutral game.

One division leader from MIC Wilayah Persekutuan, closely aligned to Saravanan, remarked: "Because Saravanan is supporting Subramaniam, he is constantly attacked by Palanivel's supporters and Thinakural. But Subramaniam is not coming to Saravanan's defence by saying that Saravanan is not instigating him."

The same division leader also pointed out: "Recently one Tamil daily reported that Subramaniam has called for a leadership change in one of his meetings with the branch chairmen."

"However, the very next day, Subramaniam's press secretary retracted the statement claiming that Subramaniam did not say so and that he was misquoted.

"If the so called presidential candidate doesn't even want to talk about leadership change, how are we going to push through a contest? If Subramaniam doesn't take an aggressive campaign stand then we feel it will not be possible to give a decent challenge since Palanivel is riding high on the sentiments that he is only seeking one more term."

However, the Tamil news papers widely reported a statement from Subramaniam today, in which he stated that it would be his own decision as to which post he would go for and that he would not make his decision due to pressure from any quarters.

NONEHe also said that some people have misconstrued his meet-the branch leaders-sessions as a tacit campaign for the presidential race, thus softening his stand against Palanivel (left).

Such rumblings in the Subramaniam-Saravanan camp seems to be another important development why Subramaniam may opt out from presidential race to stay-put comfortably as deputy president.

MIC sources said that Saravanan, through his cleverly maneuvered political moves has emerged as the trump-card holder in the presidential race and that Subramaniam can never dream of challenging Palanivel without the support of Saravanan.

Palanivel-Saravanan meeting

Amidst such latest developments, MIC sources pointed out that a crucial meeting took place today between Palanivel and Saravanan, which is expected to set the direction for future contests in the party.

MIC sources said that if the meeting between Palanivel and Saravanan ends up amicably and if Palanivel is able to convince him as to why he should remain as president for one more term then Saravanan may opt to stay out of the presidential race.

Such a decision would put Subramaniam in a predicament to decide whether it is worthwhile to go alone for a presidential contest without the support from Saravanan.

The answer is obvious! It would be almost an impossible task for Subramaniam to take on Palanivel for presidency without open support from Saravanan.

There are also several other indications why the much anticipated presidential race may fizzle out.

For the last one week, Tamil Nesan, a Tamil daily owned by Samy Vellu's family has stopped attacks against Palanivel, which indicates that there could have been a truce between Samy Vellu and Palanivel.

In conclusion, due to the sudden political mood change taking place in MIC, Palanivel may be elected as President unopposed on Sept 1, the date scheduled for nominations for the presidential election

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