

What's next for MIC following Palani-Dr Subra truce?

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ANALYSIS Last Sunday, the MIC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur was abuzz with activity with hundreds of MIC branch chairpersons converging there.

It was the day for MIC branch chairpersons from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Pahang to personally receive the endorsement signature from president G Palanivel in their respective nomination forms for the MIC presidential election.

The next evening (Aug 19), Palanivel headed for Seremban where he received similar support from branch chairpersons in Negri Sembilan.

NONEMIC sources said the overwhelming response received by Palanivel (right) on these two occasions had changed deputy president Dr S Subramaniam's mind about contesting for the top post.

The media is also abuzz with speculation that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak met the key leaders of MIC and brokered a deal whereby Palanivel and Subramaniam would be elected as president and deputy president respectively, with Palanivel agreeing to step down in 2016 after serving one more term.

A formal announcement on this deal is expected tomorrow.

Besides the deal brokered by the PM, MIC sources pointed out that it was Subramaniam's delay in announcing if he wanted to contest that enabled Palanivel to take the lead in the run-up to the presidential campaign.

While Palanivel was moving at a hectic speed with some tactical moves, Subramaniam was too slow and delayed his announcement to the dismay of even his close confidantes and the branch and division chairpersons who were prepared to publicly declare their support for him.

Supporters in a predicament

The nomination forms for the presidential election were made available from Aug 15 onwards and immediately Palanivel's supporters collected the forms in bulk and began securing supporting signatures from the branch chairpersons.

Each nomination form must be supported by one proposer and seconded by five

others. All proposers and seconders must be branch chairpersons eligible to vote in the presidential election.

In a flash, Aug 18 was fixed as the date for the president to appear in person at the MIC headquarters to sign the nomination forms in the presence of MIC branch chairpersons from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Pahang.

It must be noted here that of the 4,000 odd MIC branches nationwide, about 1,500 are located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, forming more than 35 percent of the total electorate eligible to vote in the presidential election.

NONE While branch chairpersons were pressured to sign the nomination forms in favour of Palanivel, Subramaniam (left) was still undecided and even his close supporters were in the dark as to his next move.

This prompted many neutral branch chairpersons, who were expecting a contest, to enter into the good books of Palanivel without further delay and decided to file the nomination forms in favour of Palanivel to show their support.

With the new twist, several branch chairpersons, who had publicly declared their support for Subramaniam, are now caught in a predicament.

The last minute withdrawal by Subramaniam had put his supporters in a fix as the division chairpersons favourable to him would now have to face the wrath of Palanivel's supporters gearing up to challenge them in the forthcoming divisional elections scheduled to be held after the presidential election.

Within the divisions headed by supporters of Palanivel, attempts are now being made to identify branch chairpersons who had openly backed Subramaniam to ensure they are not selected as delegates to the national assembly, which would elect the deputy president, three vice-presidents and 23 Central Working Committee (CWC) members.

MIC sources close to Subramaniam said by backing out from the contest, the health minister had safeguarded his own position but placed his supporters in a dilemma.

Palanivel's supporters claim that the president and his key supporters were looking at controlling the party beyond 2016. His supporters said that three years was too long a period in politics to pre-determine leadership or succession changes.

Palanivel's political secretary and Selayang MIC division chairperson P Palaniappan himself issued a press statement to Tamil papers today claiming that there was no

truth in the speculation that Palanivel was being forced to step down as president within the next three years.

Observers following the MIC elections claim that the no-contest announcement was a boost for Palanivel as he had secured one more term as president without any serious contest.

However, some observers felt otherwise.

A victory for Subramaniam?

Some quarters were of the opinion that Subramaniam had calculated the situation well and cornered Palanivel with the latter's own words that he would step down after serving one more term.

mic 62 agm 120708 delegatesBy not contesting against Palanivel, Subramaniam had cleverly secured his presidency in three years time without any difficulty.

From now onwards, Palanivel would be seen as the outgoing president without much clout and the branch and divisional leaders would be clamouring to support Subramaniam.

"It is only Palanivel's close supporters who are in a predicament now. They must collect their 'political dues or favours' from Palanivel within the next three years.

"More importantly, Subramaniam's supporters are now expected to vie for the majority of the CWC seats in the forthcoming elections. Once they are able to achieve a majority in the CWC, then Palanivel's tenure may be even shorter than three years as pressure would mount on him to step down and pave the way for Subramaniam," said a party insider.