

MIC polls focus shifts to vice-presidents

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ANALYSIS Come Sept 1, G Palanivel will be elected as president of MIC without any contest. In the given political scenario, it is a mammoth task for anyone to garner the support of more than 300 branches in order to mount a challenge for the presidency.

Dr S Subramaniam, who agreed not to contest for the top post, is also not expected to face any serious contest for his deputy president's post.

mic 62 agm 120708 delegates Taking a cue from Palanivel who has announced that he will relinquish his position in favour of Subramaniam, in the first quarter of 2016, all the key leaders of MIC are now vying for the vice-president slot to enable them to position themselves when the leadership transition takes place in 2016.

None of them are interested in mounting a challenge for deputy presidency as they know it will be political suicide if they lose.

As of today, the indications are that the following candidates will be contesting for a vice president's slot in the forthcoming MIC elections:

1. M Saravanan (incumbent and deputy minister)
2. SK Devamany (incumbent and Perak state assembly speaker)
3. Senator Jaspal Singh (treasurer-general of MIC)
4. SA Vigneswaran (former Youth leader)
5. S Vell Paari (strategy director and son of former president S Samy Vellu)
6. S Sothinathan (former vice-president and former deputy minister)
7. T Mohan (current Youth leader)
8. Ragu Moorthy (Businessman from Klang)
9. P Kamalanathan (deputy minister)

There could be few more candidates in the coming weeks as the divisional elections, which will elect the delegates to the general assembly, is yet to take place. It is mandatory that the candidate for CWC or vice president must be a delegate to the general assembly.

In the coming weeks, these vice presidential candidates will criss-cross the country meeting the delegates and seeking their support. If the leadership transition takes place smoothly in 2016 as planned, then one of the elected vice presidents stands a

chance to be chosen by Subramaniam to be the acting deputy president. Alternatively, Subramaniam may also opt to leave the position vacant and leave it for contest to enable the delegates to elect a deputy president of their choice.

Thus the scramble has begun among the aspirants to position themselves as one of the vice presidents.

Saravanan is leading the race

Among the contestants, one candidate stands out amongst others to clinch the position of vice president and he is none other than Saravanan. As incumbent vice-president and deputy minister, he has been in constant touch with the delegates and attends most of the MIC functions

mic 62 agm 120708 saravananHe is also the favourite guest of honour for Tamil literary functions and cultural events, especially book launches of Malaysian Tamil literary works authored by local writers.

His down-to-earth disposition, Tamil oratory skills, strong backing from supporters of former party president S Samy Vellu are some of the factors favouring him.

Among the contestants, Saravanan is the only one who is a state chairman and with that he will be able to garner substantial votes from Wilayah Persekutuan MIC, which he heads.

Devamany also has a fair chance of retaining his position as vice president. There is widespread sympathy for him because of the manner he was unfairly uprooted by the party president as MP of Cameron Highlands and placed in Sungai Siput, where he lost to Dr D Michael Jeyakumar.

NONEHowever, he made a come-back when he was appointed as the Speaker of the Perak state assembly. The two-term parliamentarian has also earned accolades from the Perak menteri besar for his performance as speaker. His current position is also expected to earn him support from the majority of delegates from Perak.

Perak will be the state sending the second or third highest number of delegates to the MIC general assembly.

Devamany was able to win in the last party elections because he was a deputy minister then. The fact that he is now holding a state level position could be a setback for him.

S Vell Paari, SA Vigneswaran and S Sothinathan are the other favourites to clinch the third slot. It will be a tough contest for the three candidates as all of them have their own positive and negative factors.

NONEJaspal, on the other hand, is unlikely to win in the race because more than 90% of the delegates are of South Indian Tamil origin and whether he will be able to garner their support as a North Indian, is something yet to be seen.

Although there have been instances in the past, where KS Nijhar, also a North Indian, won as a vice president, it must be remembered that he was able to win only because of strong backing from Samy Vellu.

Ragu Moorthy, another aspirant, has been travelling across the country meeting delegates and on most occasions he is seen with Palanivel. However, he is not considered as a serious contender by the delegates.

Mohan, who has now become a branch chairman in Puchong, has already announced he will not seek re-election as Youth leader. Some sources claim that he is eyeing vice-presidency but may choose to go for CWC as the race for vice-presidents seems to be overcrowded.

ijok by election mic campaign 250407 sothinathanAs for Sothinathan, he may make a comeback as a vice-president but there is a general complaint that he does not keep in touch with the grassroots. He is seldom seen in MIC functions and public functions. Therefore he may face an uphill task.

On the other hand, supporters of former deputy president S Subramaniam are also not in favour of Sothinathan as they feel he is the one who spoiled the chances of Subramaniam to win against Palanivel in 2009 party elections.

Over the next one month , MIC divisions will see intense battles to elect their respective division office-bearers and delegates to the national assembly. The outcome of these elections will largely also determine the outcome of the vice-presidential race.

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