

Democracy thrives in MIC

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KUALA LUMPUR: Democracy appears to be thriving in the MIC if the list of candidates for the party elections tomorrow is anything to go by.

Fifty-one candidates are vying for the 23 central working committee (CWC) posts, although party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu has issued his list of preferred men.

And for the three vice-president posts, four of the seven candidates are not endorsed by the president

"What's really encouraging is that many of the aspirants who are challenging the endorsed candidates are those who have benefited greatly from Samy

Vellu's generosity.

"For the CWC posts, there are 28 who are going against the 23 president's men," a party observer said.

"Some of them even took out advertisements in Tamil dailies.

"And their move is not seen as defying the president. Everyone knows all of them are his supporters at the end of the day."

On the other hand, he said, their move could also be construed as a signal to the leadership that they want to play a role in the party.

A branch leader said this augured well for the future of the party, adding that all of them would back the president after the elections.

"This is the kind of democracy we want," he said.

These things aside, the choice of their next deputy president will be the main focus of the 1,441 delegates, who were wooed intensely by the candidates and campaigners.

With a day to go before voting, leaders are saying most of them would have already made up their minds by now.

Indications are that the contest for the number two post between incumbent Datuk S. Subramaniam, 61, and his challenger Datuk G. Palanivel, 57, is going to be close, with the latter having the edge with the party president's open backing.

Some say only the question of majority remains to be seen

Samy Vellu is confident that

most, if not all, of his men would make it, as he feels they want a change.

"They (the delegates) want a change in the leadership, as it would lead to the betterment of the Indian community. I am confident Palanivel will win," he said after wrapping up the last leg of his nationwide campaign in Selangor on Wednesday.

The president went on to say that a vote for his choice of candidates would be a vote for him. "Vote for them and show that you are with me" has been his call to the delegates.

Although both Subramaniam and Palanivel are confident of victory, many feel their fate would depend a lot on how the delegates react to Samy Vellu's

strong campaign for Palanivel.

Whoever secures 721 votes is assured of a win.

Palanivel's camp is confident of garnering between 850 to 930 votes. While Subramaniam's campaigners are hoping for 70% support.

Subramaniam was reported to have said that he was bent on defending his post, although his rivals were eager "to end his political life."

"There have been unkind remarks and uncultured campaigns. They are trying to dig my political grave. They want to unseat me and kill me off from the active political arena," he said.

"It has been harsh. I have been bruised, attacked and humiliated.

"But I have not asked for any help. I have done it on my own and never cried for sympathy."

Palanivel had stressed in his campaigns that he had conscientiously worked hard and used every opportunity in his Government portfolios to formulate and devise programmes benefiting Indians.

"At a time when propaganda and misinformation can be circulated very easily, it is important for delegates to seek the truth before voting," he said.

Regardless of the margin of victory for Palanivel, for Subramaniam the loss would spell the end of his long and arduous political career, which started in 1973 - most of which was under the leadership of Samy Vellu.