

## **Palanivel To Strengthen MIC To Face 13th GE**

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 28 (Bernama) -- To win back the trust of the Indian voters for the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, the MIC is on an impassioned overdrive to put its heart and soul for the 13th general election.

MIC president Datuk G. Palanivel will steer the party in this direction.

This weekend, the man will deliver his maiden opening speech as party president at its 65th Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Ahead of the AGM, party secretary-general S. Murugesan said: "We (MIC) have widened our voter base by holding voter verification and registration exercise in all its 4,300 branches nationwide.

"The immediate priority is to ensure the registration of more than 100,000 party members as voters.

"With the help of the Election Commission, the MIC would also register new voters," he told Bernama in an exclusive interview at the MIC headquarters recently.

Currently, MIC has more than 630,000 members.

Furthermore, Murugesan said the party would also study UMNO and MCA's plan on broadening the voter base, and work hand-in-hand with Barisan Nasional's (BN) component parties to secure Indian voters in the general election, as was done in the past.

"However, we did encounter some difficulties...which is, if there is a single error in the application, the Election Commission will not register the applicant and the system will reject invalid applications," he said.

In not wanting to let the cat out of the bag, the party secretary-general remained tight-lipped on a surprise announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for the Indian society at the AGM.

For the first time, the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) will be the venue for the two-day AGM, beginning July 30.

In previous years, MIC held its AGMs in their traditional venue, namely Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC). More than 4,000 branch chairmen and delegates are expected to attend this year's AGM.

On possible agendas, Murugesan said the MIC president, who took over the reins of the party, late last year, was expected to propose to Najib, a mechanism to win back the trust of the Indian voters for the BN coalition, which is currently deeply divided.

The majority of Indian groups deserted BN at the last general election in March 2008.

On former party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Murugesan described him as a "great leader and an inspiration for grassroots leaders". He said Samy Vellu would attend the AGM as a special guest.

"An appreciation event has been planned to honour the leader who had inspired MIC with

his thoughts, deeds, words and actions over the past 32 years."

As part of Palanivel's initiatives to the party's rebranding exercise, the party secretary-general said, MIC, for the very first time, would issue about 4,000 membership-cum-authority cards bearing the MIC logo, at the AGM.

Without revealing the actual cost, Murugesan said each card would cost about RM5, with magnetic strip and barcode, and be issued in phases. In the first phase, the cards will be issued for branch chairmen and delegates, while the second and third phases were meant for office-bearers and members, respectively.

"In future, the party would include the existing insurance scheme in the card and have talks with big shopping malls, airlines, travel agencies, hotels and related firms to allow members to enjoy benefits and privileges," he said.

The party will also launch two of its new products. They are MIC Times, which will be published in a hardcopy format, and MIC TV, a web-based TV at the MIC website as part of Palanivel's outreach programme, with emphasis on retraining and empowering the party and the Indian community, at large.

MIC Times will be published once every two months, in both Tamil and English, with its main content focusing on the party president's vision to rejuvenate and reinvent strategies, ideas and changes to help the MIC relive its glory days.

"For now, MIC Times will be distributed within the party and mailed to all branch chairmen. MIC Times will also give information to branch leaders on the government's existing and future policies, specifically for Indians, for example the Tekun loan scheme and study loans.

"We will also welcome articles related to the Indian community at the grassroots-level, aiming to create a sense of belonging," he said, adding that the first edition would be distributed at the AGM.

On the MIC Web TV, with "a shoestring budget", Murugesan said it served to highlight activities and contributions which were convenient and valued by all sectors, with high quality information to reach the audience, especially Indian society.

MIC Web TV, which will be operated from MIC headquarters through appointed staff, will be accessible round-the-clock.

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