

**Palanivel says Perak Speaker post belongs to MIC, denies threatening BN  
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BY CLARA CHOOI**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 10 — Datuk Seri G. Palanivel has denied threatening the Perak Barisan Nasional (BN) government over the Speaker's post, saying the MIC is merely requesting for something that already belongs to the party.

The MIC president said it was "wrong" to label his party's ultimatum a threat, reminding his critics that the post was given to the MIC when BN captured Perak after the 2009 power tussle with Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

He added a claim that even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had recommended that the Perak government return the post to the MIC.

"We are not threatening anyone. We are just asking for what belonged to us. We are denied what was ours before the election," he said in a statement to The Malaysian Insider via email today.

Palanivel was responding to state BN Backbenchers Club chairman Datuk Mohd Khusairi Abdul Talib who was reported yesterday as hitting out at the MIC for refusing to take up any government posts if it was denied the position of state assembly Speaker.

"MIC president Datuk G. Palanivel's statement on the matter is an apparent threat against Zambry. He has made himself unfit to lead the party," Khusairi was quoted as saying in the New Straits Times yesterday, in reference to Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir.

But Palanivel said it was Zambry who should be responding to the matter and no one else.

He reminded the second-term Umno menteri besar that the Indian community had given much of its support to BN's candidates in Election 2013, helping the pact recapture the silver state after a divisive polls.

In Election 2008, the Cameron Highlands MP added, the Indian community had fled BN's side and supported the opposition, leading to BN's fall at the time.

"It's wrong to say we are threatening. We just want back the Speaker post," he repeated in his statement.

"When the opposition was ruling we had an Indian Speaker. When BN took over an Indian Speaker was appointed," he pointed out.

When PR ruled Perak between 2008 and 2009, the pact appointed then Tronoh assemblyman V. Sivakumar as Speaker, the first Indian in the state to be given the post.

When BN wrested the state back from PR a year later, Perak MIC chief Datuk R. Ganesan replaced Sivakumar in the Speaker's chair.

Prior to Election 2013, Zambry told reporters that despite the small number of Indian

representation among BN's polls candidates, the Indian community could rest assured that it would be fairly represented should the ruling coalition win in Perak.

He said government posts would be guaranteed to members of the community, regardless whether its candidates win in the election.

In the May 5 polls, the MIC only survived the contest in the Tapah parliamentary seat and lost its bid in the Sungai Siput federal seat and three state seats of Buntong, Jelapang and Hutan Melintang.

"Give us back the Speaker post," Palanivel repeated a third time in his statement. "We need a mixture of all races in the state assembly.

"The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Zahid Hamidi suggested we retain an MIC Speaker and give to Datuk Ganesan," he added.

On Saturday, Palanivel said the MIC will reject all government posts in Perak if the state government refuses to award the Speaker post to one of its party leaders.

In a statement to the press, the MIC chief said his party would only stay BN-friendly in Perak but would not accept any state executive councillor post in the Umno-heavy state leadership.

The party would also reject appointments to the posts of special officer and adviser to the menteri besar, the Cameron Highlands MP said.

The party chief also said the MIC's central working committee will convene a meeting on June 18 to discuss the matter, along with other issues related to the coming party elections.

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