

**Palanivel Retains MIC Presidency Unopposed**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 1 (Bernama) -- MIC president Datuk Seri G.Palanivel (centre) won the party presidency unopposed when nominations closed at noon Sunday.

MIC presidential election steering committee head Tan Sri K.Kumaran announced Palanivel's uncontested election to cheers and shouts of 'Long Live Palanivel' by nearly 1,500 supporters who had gathered at the MIC headquarters, Jalan Rahmat in the capital, since 9 am.

The MIC chief, who joined the party in 1968 as an ordinary member, garnered 617 nominations, well above the 50 nominations required.

Kumaran said Palanivel was officially elected as MIC's 8th President under Article 58.3 and 58.1.2 of the party constitution.

"Datuk Seri G.Palanivel will be the MIC President for three years (2013-2016) or until the next presidential election," Kumaran said.

The MIC president is picked by the chairmen of the party's 4,000 branches.

Speaking to reporters after the announcement, Palanivel thanked MIC grassroots leaders, especially branch chairmen, who had entrusted and honoured him to lead the 77-year-old party.

"I'm very touched by the solid support and trust placed in me. I appreciate your confidence in me," the 64-year-old leader told his supporters.

Palanivel, who took over the party leadership when former Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu stepped down in 2010, had earlier declared that it would be his last term if elected.

He also announced that he would be the returning officer for the election steering committee with Kumaran as his deputy.

The elections for the other national posts - deputy president, three vice presidents and 23 central working committee members - is scheduled for November.

In a new development, Palanivel announced that he might continue to hold the president's post even after his term ends in 2016.

"I have received overwhelming support in the nomination today. I had 617 nominations or 96 per cent support from branch chairmen for the post. This is a good sign and a good beginning for me.

"More than 3,000 branch chairmen want me to continue being the president. I will make a decision in 2016. I also feel like retiring but the branch chairmen are forcing me to continue," he told reporters after he was announced eighth MIC president at the party headquarters.

However, Palanivel stressed that he would prefer to focus on strengthening the party's status, in terms of financial capacity and membership, in the next three years.

Commenting further, the natural resources and environment minister outlined few agendas to uplift the party, in terms of social, economic, educational and sports development.

He said he would ask Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to announce a special allocation in the 2014 Budget, among others for temples and business purposes to help the low income group comprising 30 per cent of the Indian community.

With a view to attract more youth, women and non-governmental organisation members into the party fold, Palanivel said he would rope in between 600 and 700 members.

He said that MIC had identified a piece of land to build a new 12-storey party headquarters.

Asked whether he would have his line-up for the other national posts - deputy president, three vice-presidents and 23 central working committee members - scheduled for the November election, Palanivel said:

"We will allow a freedom of contest. Everyone can contest. But, I will also know how to bring my line-up. Many will contest for the vice-president posts. I will have to look very carefully."

Meanwhile, MIC vice-president Datuk M. Saravanan has urged party members to unite under 'one umbrella' under the leadership of newly-elected party president Palanivel.

He said under the leadership, MIC would continue to strive for the betterment of the Indian community, mainly in enhancing its economy and education status.

"I hope the new leadership will enhance efforts to upgrade the economic status of the youths in the country," the youth and sports deputy minister told reporters after attending the nomination for the MIC presidency.

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