

MIC Crisis A Wake-Up Call For Palanivel - Analysts

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KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Political analysts have described the protest by party members inside and outside the MIC headquarters here last week, as a long overdue 'wake-up' call for party president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel to strengthen the party as well as change his style of leadership.

They say, the call was the last straw for Palanivel to step up and reinvigorate the party or face continuous call from leaders and members to step down early.

In their view, Palanivel must not only lead with strong leadership, but must be seen to lead, as many members inside as well as the community at large outside, perceived him to be "silent" and "not seen", when the party and the community was faced with important issues.

Universiti Sains Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said the scuffle between rival faction last week was an "alarming signal" for Palanivel to do something really fast under his leadership to restore the party's previous glory and image as the largest Indian-based party and a key Barisan Nasional (BN) component.

"It is high time for the president to show his potential and capability and to be more vocal to unite and bring members and fence-sitters back together, thus ensuring that MIC remains relevant to the Indian community," he told Bernama when contacted.

He was commenting on the chaos at the MIC headquarters where several hundred supporters spewing profanities, with name-calling exchanged, pushing, and shouting as the disputed Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting took place.

The crucial meeting was to decide on a directive from the Registrar of Societies (ROS) to hold a fresh election within 90 days.

The ROS had nullified the elections for the three vice-presidents and 23 CWC posts held during the party's general assembly in Melaka, last November.

In the Dec 5 letter, the ROS said they had recommended that the posts be re-elected within 90 days, following alleged irregularities and breach of the party's constitution and the Societies Act.

The ROS had advised the MIC to not hold its annual general meeting until the matter was resolved.

The last time there was a big crowd at the MIC headquarters was when the then president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu stepped down in December 2010 after 31 years at the helm.

Elaborating further, Dr Sivamurugan said although Palanivel's leadership style at times had irked members and grassroots leaders, he can rise from any of his shortcomings.

"Take the protest as a lesson to move forward to face bigger challenges ahead and help Barisan Nasional to retain power. Have a detailed post-mortem study, evaluate and find ways to face the problems, efficiently," he said.

Meanwhile, Prof Madya Dr Ahmad Martadha B Mohamed of Universiti Utara Malaysia said Malaysia's political culture always emphasized on the need for a strong leader who can lead their party to greater heights, and brace themselves to face greater challenges.

"As such, Palanivel seems to be perceived as a weak leader compared to his predecessor because he seems to be less vocal and tends to wait before making decisions on critical issues," said the UUM Law, Government and International Studies lecturer.

This silence and "wait and see attitude" has brought party members to view him as an incapable, weak and indecisive leader, and hence the call for him to step down, he added.

Dr Ahmad Martadha suggested that setting up an independent committee at this particular time seems to be the best option for the party, since there seems no other clear solution in sight, thus the committee would be the plausible answer to the ongoing conflict in the party.

"The blaming game and the bickering will stop if there are attempts to solve the real issues in the party. As such, there must be a clear plan to solve the crisis in the MIC now, and it should involve a neutral party to become the mediator between the opposing camps in the party," he said.

Associate Prof Dr Sarjit Singh Gill of Universiti Putra Malaysia said Palanivel has appeared to have taken to maintaining silence, whenever he was confronted with community issues or party matters.

"It has been four years since Palanivel took over the reins of the party from Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu. But, what we saw was the internal issues that had stood out prominently, causing party leaders and members to voice out their displeasure.

"Therefore, the party requires a dynamic leadership that can adequately handle the challenges with an urgent need to rejuvenate the party so that it can remain relevant in the local political landscape," he said.

Sharing a similar sentiment, political analyst Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani said the president needs to buck up immediately to show that he is commanding the party and leading in the right direction when handling problems of the Indian community.

"Palanivel has no choice but to resolve the crisis by rebranding. Some segments of the

Indian community are already rejecting MIC because they perceive MIC leaders are too greedy for power," the dean of the School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia said.

Dr Mohd Azizuddin said MIC members should stop bickering, instead stand united to fix the re-election problem, address their differences and hopefully, reach a compromise.

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