

Chavez's cancer surgery successful, Venezuela VP says - Tehran Times

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CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's cancer operation in Cuba on Tuesday was a success, his vice president said, adding that the complex surgery had lasted more than six hours and he would be recuperating for several days. The 58-year-old socialist leader's third bout with cancer in the past 18 months has thrown his presidency into jeopardy and upended politics in the South American OPEC nation.

“Once again, our comandante has shown his strength,” Vice President Nicolas Maduro said in a broadcast on state television as members of the government alongside him applauded.

“We want to thank the Venezuelan people for all the love they dedicated so this operation was completed correctly and successfully,” said Maduro, whom Chavez has named as his successor if he is unable to stay in power.

Maduro said the post-operative phase would last several days. “We can say the president has beaten the first obstacle and now, with his medical team, he will go on recuperating.”

Chavez's surgery in Cuba, a close ally, was his fourth since mid-2011. Doctors found malignant cells again in his pelvic area soon after he comfortably won re-election in October.

Chavez had twice declared himself cured, only for the cancer to return. He has said he still hopes to recover from this operation in time for the January 10 start of a new six-year term in office.

He named Maduro on Saturday as a potential heir to lead his self-styled revolution in a nation of 29 million people with the world's largest oil reserves.

The move irked some in Venezuela's opposition, who say voters - not Chavez - would decide who follows him if he were forced to step down and an election was held within 30 days, as required under the constitution.