

26/02/1999

Chong resigns from PM's Department to contest in Kudat

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KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Datuk Chong Kah Kiat has resigned as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department to contest the Kudat seat in the March 12-13 State election.

Chong, 50, president of the Chinese-based Liberal Democratic Party, also said he was not eyeing the Chief Minister's post under the system of rotating the post among leaders of the Chinese, Muslim Bumiputera and Non-Muslim Bumiputera communities.

"I have no desire to be CM," Chong told a Press conference at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport today.

He said he had told this to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he called on the BN chairman on Tuesday.

He said the allocation of seats had been finalised and that it had been decided he contest in Kudat.

Chong said he had resigned to help him concentrate fully on Sabah, especially Kudat, and help the BN win the election.

He tendered his letter of resignation, which takes effect on Monday, yesterday. Chong said he resigned as Cabinet Minister on his own accord although the Federal and State constitutions did not require him to do so in order to contest a State seat.

Chong, who remains a Senator, said the PM respected his decision and had wished him well.

Chong's decision has made the contest in the Kudat constituency one of the highlights of the election as it will pit him against the incumbent, Datuk Kong Hong Ming, who was his No 2 in LDP.

At the last State polls, Kong then still in LDP, won in Kudat on the BN ticket. He later tried unsuccessfully to unseat Chong as party president.

Later, he joined Gerakan and is now with PBS.

Datuk Yong Teck Lee, president of Sabah Progressive Party was the first Chief Minister under the rotation system introduced after the 1994 polls, representing the Chinese community. MCA is the other Chinese-based party in Sabah BN.

As Sabah BN component parties headed towards nomination day, their leaders said seat allocation had been finalised. They met Dr Mahathir yesterday to discuss the matter.

State BN chairman and Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, who returned from Kuala Lumpur tonight, will announce the number of seats to be allocated to each component party on Monday.

He told reporters at the airport that the parties had reached a consensus on the allocation of seats.

Asked whether everybody was happy, he said "as happy as can be."

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was here to attend a function, said there were no major differences among the component parties on seat allocation.

He said it was normal for the issue of allocation of seats to take some time to finalise.

In the dissolved 48-seat State Legislative Assembly, Umno had 21 members, Parti Demokratik Sabah of Dompok (11), SAPP (5), Akar (3), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (2) and MCA (1). The main opposition party, Parti Bersatu Sabah had four members in an Assembly which also comprised an independent.

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