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`We have say in seats and candidates'

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KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - State Barisan Nasional leaders will still have a say in the selection of candidates and allocation of seats for the impending State election although the matter will be determined by the national BN leadership.

Dompok, who is State BN chairman, said all BN component parties in Sabah were represented in the national BN committee headed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I myself am a vice-chairman of the national BN by virtue of my position as the president of a BN component party in Sabah," he told a Press conference after the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Dompok is president of Parti Demokratik Sabah.

The other component parties of the State BN are Umno, Sabah Progressive Party, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat, Liberal Demokratik Party, MCA, Gerakan and MIC.

With the exception of Umno, MCA, MIC and Gerakan, all the State BN components are Sabah-based parties.

Dompok said the leaders of the other Sabah-based parties were also vice-chairmen of the national BN.

He was commenting on reports quoting Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as saying that BN components in Sabah had agreed to leave it to the national BN leadership to determine the candidates and seat allocation for the State polls.

Abdullah had said this was decided when he met State BN leaders during his three-day visit last week.

Saying that intense lobbying for candidacy was normal, Dompok stressed that the national BN leadership would have the final say.

On calls by certain quarters for the State election to be held simultaneously with the national one, Dompok said he did not see the advantage of having two polls at the same time.

On whether the State BN was worried of losing votes from the Muslim Bumiputera with active campaigning by Parti Bersekutu, Dompok said he was optimistic the people would prefer the BN as it had proven its capability in developing the State.

To another question, he said the people of Sabah were getting tired of the Opposition's rhetoric on the so-called need to protect State rights and interests.

"The rights and interests of the people and the State are well protected under the BN," he said.

Dompok added that the State BN had never given away these rights and interests.

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