

Upko unhappy with Sabah Umno's seat-grabbing
Malaysiakini.com
June 30, 2010

The United PasokMomogun KadazanDusunMurut Organisation (Upko) wants the ruling BN to decide on seat allocations on the basis of consensus.

It is against religious persuasions - as is demanded by Sabah Umno - being the sole criteria now for BN seat allocations in the state 'when the party had previously claimed to be a bumiputera party'.

In Sabah, a bumiputera is defined as an indigenous native of the state, who may or may not be Muslim.

Sabah Umno is made up of Muslims like the Bajau, Suluk, Irranun and Barunai, along with Dusun Muslims (Ranau, Orang Sungei, Bisaya), Bugis (who are Muslims), Christian natives and others.

Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman, for example, is a Pathan-Dusun (Afghani Christian).

Upko does not see why Umno must press their claims for every Muslim-majority seat in Sabah "amidst proven cases of illegal immigrants with MyKads on the electoral rolls".

The implication is that the claimed number of Muslim-majority seats in the state doesn't quite tally with the population of genuine Sabahans.

NONEAlso, it is being pointed out that Umno has bumiputera seats which do not have a Muslim majority.

"Umno leaders are now in the habit of grabbing seats already held by other BN component parties," opined Upko deputy president Wilfred Mojilip bin Bumburing, a Christian and also Tuaran MP.

"They want to use the so-called criteria of Muslim-majority to press their claims."

Bumburing's remarks coincide with that of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in Penampang last night. Najib (right) wants seat allocations to be left to him. "I will decide what is best for Sabah," he said.

Bumburing noted that so far Umno had already demanded Merotai (LDP) and Putatan (Upko) to be returned. He expects Umno to demand Tanjung Kapor (LDP) next.

The Upko deputy chief stressed that his party, being largely ethnic-based despite being multiracial, would have no problems if race (not religion) was to be used as the criteria for allocation of seats provided the figures used are for real.

He thinks this approach, as opposed to forging consensus, would settle once and for all the issue of BN component parties trying to wrest seats held by fellow component parties.

His formula is that Sabah BN be restructured along the lines of race-based parties. This would be followed by the largest ethnic grouping in a particular constituency being given the choice of fielding a candidate under the BN banner.

He did not break down exactly how this formula is supposed to work in its specifics.

Illegals boosting Muslim count

The Dusun community, for example comprises many tribes including minority Muslims while the urban Dusuns describe themselves as Kadazan. Then, there are the Muruts to complete the native picture discounting the more recently-arrived Muslim natives like the Bajau and Suluk and the 50,000-strong Barunai (Brunei Malay).

There are also significant numbers of Bugis holding the MyKad in Merotai and elsewhere.

willy" This seat issue flares up now and then based on religion, and there seems to be no end to it. It's a big distraction to say the least," said Bumburing (left), whose Tuaran seat is largely Dusun including some Dusun Muslim polling stations. "We don't see this kind of bickering among BN component parties in peninsular Malaysia."

As a case in point, he cited that in all Malaysian Indian Congress-held seats, the Indian community is in a minority. However, the party was allocated the seats based on the principle of who can best win the seat for the ruling coalition given the close rapport between BN supporters and considering the opposition's strategy.

Putatan MP Marcus Mojigoh said that whoever is chosen for his seat must be able to deliver it to the BN. He sees this as the most important criteria.

"To consider Upko more 'alien' than others in Putatan is just nonsensical," said Mojigoh in a thinly-veiled reference to the alleged number of illegal immigrants in the seat with MyKads. "We work well in Putatan, irrespective of race and religion, and that's why we won the seat for BN."

Mojigoh warned Sabah Umno leaders against marginalising other BN component parties just because they hold the majority of the seats in the ruling coalition. "These attempts are not good," he said. "The KDM and the Chinese would not take it lying down."

Hornet's nest

Upko vice-president Wences Angang echoed Mojigoh and Bumburing's remarks. He wonders why some Sabah Umno leaders are fond of disturbing the hornet's nest.

"If Umno is adamant about grabbing seats from other BN component parties, we might as well give up all seats to them. It's sad to see this happening when the state government has just about reached stability."

He urged Sabah BN leaders to stop harassing one another if they loved peace, stability and continued development.

Merotai, Putatan and Tanjung Kapor are allegedly over-run with illegal immigrants, a point repeatedly stressed during previous fights over seat allocation. Umno had to back down each time when the issue of illegal immigrants was raised.

Kalabakan MP Abdul Ghapur, an Indian Muslim, ignited the latest spat among BN component parties in the state by demanding that Merotai be handed back to Umno. He claimed that the seat was "on loan" to LDP from Umno.

This was followed by his Wanita chief, Hamisa Samat, urging LDP "not to be selfish and

heed the wishes of the Umno divisions which want the seat back".

Deputy Chief Minister Yahya Hussin jumped on the bandwagon repeating his long-standing demand that Putatan be returned to Umno. Yahya holds the Petagas state seat in the constituency, and has made no secret of his desire to be the Umno candidate in Putatan.

Total disregard

LDP publicity chief Albert Kok has described the demands as reflecting total disregard for the coalition's spirit of comradeship.

"This is the result of the state Umno leadership failing to discipline its members," said Kok. "Such demands create a dangerous precedent and will backfire on the coalition when election time comes."

Merotai featured prominently during seven Internal Security Act arrests of mostly National Registration Department (NRD) staff following the re-entry of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) on Wed 23 Jan, 2002 into the BN. PBS had alleged the rampant issuance of MyKads to illegal immigrants in Merotai, among other places.

Before the Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) quit the BN on Sept 17, 2008, Sabah Umno was allocated 32 of the 60 state seats while the PBS had 13, Upko 6, PBRS 1, LDP 3, Sapp 4, and MCA 1.

The parliamentary distribution was Umno 13, PBS 4, Upko 4, PBRS 1, LDP 1 and Sapp 2. The 26th parliamentary seat in Labuan is held by Umno.

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