

Liew: LDP to ignore 'seat-grabbers'
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The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will not budge in the face of demands by "seat-grabbers" in the BN, swears its president VK Liew, who is also Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

liew vui keong "Other BN component parties – besides Sabah Umno - are also adopting the same approach."

BN seat-grabbers is LDP's euphemism for Sabah Umno after having previously blamed the party bluntly on seat allocation issues.

"Those who do this (grabbing) are emotional and would tarnish the BN's image," said Liew. "BN as a whole will be affected in the forthcoming general elections if this seat-grabbing trend continues."

bn mps from sabah 180608 The normally reticent LDP chief was commenting on renewed demands this week within Sabah Umno for the "return of seats on loan" to other BN components parties, including the LDP. Umno also wants other BN parties to stop "pinching" its members.

Liew added that his party will honour the BN 'big family' tradition whereby seat allocations are discussed by the top leadership.

Consensus, compromise, power-sharing

He expressed confidence that any "misunderstandings" could be resolved in the spirit of consensus, compromise and coalition's power-sharing formula.

At the same time, however, the party would reject any notion that anyone "owns" the seats.

"There are no seats owned by any party," warned Liew. "In this era of democracy, all seats belong to the people."

The reference point, according to Liew, should be the 12th general election in 2008 and the 11 by-elections that have been held since then and which indicate the extent that the people have rejected "racial politics".

"Discrimination in any form is no longer accepted by the people."

He called on the state BN to "rectify the problem" as it would set a bad precedent that could spread to other issues if allowed to continue.

Meanwhile, he urged LDP members not to listen to rumours and react emotionally to baseless insinuations but instead remain patient.

Liew did not touch on United Pasok Momogun Kadazan Dusun Murut Organisation (Upko) vice-president Wences Angang's recent suggestion that Umno field BN candidates in all seats.

Angang, formerly a Kuala Penyu state assemblyperson, has suggested other parties contest

the same seats under their own respective banners in a friendly "free for all".

Liew expressed the hope that the BN would respect the LDP and not see it as a mosquito party that can be easily pushed around "whenever Sabah Umno needs a whipping boy".

Having a large number of members (Sabah Umno) need not mean a party is necessarily strong, he continued, since a large party would find it more difficult than a small one to rectify such weaknesses.

He conceded that his party had been very critical of late of the state BN "over the current political developments in Sabah", but defended his criticisms as being "constructive".

"Our concerns are genuine, and we only want to ensure that the voices of the people are heard," said Liew.

"BN leaders should be sensitive to the feelings of other component parties in ensuring that the healthy and cordial relationship amongst the various leaders continues to flourish."

Stop pinching

Sabah Umno leaders have put other BN component parties on notice that it wants the Merotai state seat (currently under LDP), Likas (Sapp), the Chinese-majority Kota Kinabalu parliamentary seat (allocated to PBS but lost by a razor-thin margin to the DAP), and Putatan, currently an Upko parliamentary seat.

Kinabatangan Umno, meanwhile, wants another state seat created in the parliamentary constituency for the party. The existing seats are Kuamut (Upko) and Sukau (Umno).

abdul ghapur sallehKalabakan MP Abdul Ghapur Salleh has said he wants Gerakan to return all the members it has been "pinching" from Umno in the parliamentary seat and in Tawau.

It is believed that he was referring to Sabah Gerakan deputy president Liew Yun Fah, who used to be the LDP state assemblyperson for Merotai in the Kalabakan parliamentary constituency.

"The attitude of some of the component parties who like to take members from other fellow BN parties is not something to be proud of," said Ghapur. "Umno is not a hotel where people can check-in and check-out as they like."

2008 election results for sabah 160608Kalabakan Umno information chief Abdul Karim Wahid claimed that the 2004 decision to let LDP stand in Merotai was never accepted by the largely Bugis community in the constituency.

"The general election in 2008 showed that BN's support in the seat had dwindled tremendously," said Karim.

"LDP managed to scrape through with only 242 votes compared with the 4,000 vote majority in 2004."

He believes BN will lose Merotai in the next round if the seat is allocated to the LDP again instead of Umno.

Karim did not say whether Umno should switch another of its seats for Merotai or leave LDP

completely in the cold and risk losing the significant Iban and Chinese votes in the seat.

Karim had no comments on LDP Chin Shu Ying's allegations that local Sabah Umno leaders had openly campaigned against his party in 2008 "with the aim of wiping it out".

Putatan MP Marcus Mojigoh, meanwhile, expressed hope that not all Sabah Umno members think they can run the state all by themselves.

"If we (Upko) are considered more alien than others in Putatan, that's nonsensical," said Mojigoh in a thinly-veiled reference to the large number of illegal immigrants in the parliamentary constituency.

"Whoever is the candidate for Putatan is the choice of the top BN leadership."

Mojigoh stressed that Upko and BN component parties were still relevant. Hence, he hopes that Sabah Umno's seat-grabbing is not a deliberate attempt to marginalize the Chinese and Kadazan Dusun Murut communities.

Before Sapp quit BN in late 2008, Sabah Umno was allocated 32 of the 60 state seats, while PBS had 13, Upko 6, PBRS 1, LDP 3, SAPP 4 and MCA 1.

As for parliamentary seats, Sabah Umno had 14 including Labuan, PBS 4, Upko 4, PBRS 1, LDP 1 and SAPP 2.

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