

**LDP leaves in a huff after Sabah BN meet**  
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Unlike the other Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) did not stay back for a press conference after a rare meet of component party heads in Kota Kinabalu yesterday.

Though the party stayed through the meeting, it was the only component not represented by its president, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department VK Liew. Deputy president Chin Su Phin, who was recently axed from his state government post, and secretary-general Teo Chee Kang represented the LDP.

Asked why the party skipped the press meet, Teo replied: "People are free to speculate."

It is learnt that the party tried to bring up the aborted construction of NONEthe statute of Mazu - the Goddess of the Sea - undertaken in Kudat by former Chief Minister and LDP president Chong Kah Kiat at the meeting.

The issue has since become a political hot potato in the state and has seen LDP's fortunes on the rise in the local theatre.

Sabah BN chief and Chief Minister Musa Aman, however, shot down the party's bid on the grounds that the case had already been decided by the Federal Court.

Musa also reiterated that the state government's stand that "it was not objecting to the statue project, but that it must be relocated elsewhere from its present site, and that the offer for the new location still stands".

Not about relocation or compensation

The LDP's contention, as first explained by Musa's predecessor Chong and raised again at the meeting yesterday, was that the issue was not about relocation or compensation. This matter was not allowed to be debated.

The other component parties of the Sabah BN maintained a discreet musa aman pc in sabah 190608 01silence when Musa (right), as the state chairman, gave no room for the LDP to explain its position on the aborted statue project.

The issue, according to LDP officials, was about abuse of power and an exercise of absolute power by the state government in a privately-financed and approved project sitting on privately-owned land.

The party wants the issue of abuse of power to be first settled before being convinced that taking up the offer of relocation would be the right thing to do. Chong, according to the party, would refuse the offer of compensation if he was convinced that he was wrong in the first place.

Further, it is the considered position of the party and Chong that the Federal Court, like the Court of Appeal earlier, did not rule on the legality or the illegality of the statue project.

The courts, LDP maintains, merely said that Chong was the head of an unlawful organisation, the Kudat Thean Hou Charitable Foundation, and thereby did not have the

locus standi to bring a suit against the state government for stopping work on the statue.

It is also the party's contention that the foundation's status has nothing to do with Chong's locus standi, a point on which the courts declined to intervene.

#### Joint stand on illegal immigrants

Mazu aside, the Sabah BN meet yesterday agreed take a joint stand on the problem of illegal immigrants in the state and seat allocation among component parties. It was agreed that the allocation of seats among the various BN component parties in Sabah would be decided by BN chairman and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"Whatever has been voiced so far (in the media) could be from the grassroots," Musa told the press conference after the meet. "This is not a problem as it's normal to ask for seats. The important thing to do is to comply, once the decision to allocate the seats has been made."

The intense lobbying by Umno for several seats held by other component parties, continued Musa, has been put on the backburner.

On the issue of illegal immigrants, he said the Sabah cabinet had been briefed on the findings by the special laboratory on illegal immigrants. "The findings will be discussed collectively by all the State BN leaders".

He denied that the State BN was reluctant to convene a meeting of the component parties regularly. This, it is alleged, had led to BN component parties taking their differences to the media to the point of washing dirty linen in public.

"It's not that we don't want to have meetings. When it is important and necessary, we will have meetings," said Musa. "Each of us is very busy because as leaders, ministers, deputy ministers and assistant ministers, we all have responsibilities."

This is the second such meet in recent years, after an earlier one in March this year. The last Sabah BN meet before this, reportedly, was four years ago.

Among other issues discussed by the Sabah BN meet, according to Musa, was the issue of land. It was agreed that communal titles were the way to move forward, to prevent people from selling their lands when they had no money to develop them.

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