

LDP: Please Respect Power Sharing Principle

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- The Sabah-based Barisan Nasional (BN) component, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), wants the power sharing arrangement in the state among component parties, to be maintained and honoured.

LDP president Datuk V. K. Liew said, party delegates attending LDP's 22nd Annual Congress in Sandakan on Oct 30, were likely to push for the power sharing concept to be honoured.

This was agreed upon when the ruling BN coalition wrested back the state from the then-opposition, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), in 1985.

PBS ruled Sabah after winning the 1985 state elections and governed the state from 1985 to 1994, first as part of BN and later in opposition, when it pulled out from BN on the eve of the July 1990 state election.

PBS continued to rule the state in opposition until 1994 when BN managed to wrest back the state through defections of several PBS-elected assemblymen. PBS subsequently, rejoined the BN coalition in 2002.

"Initially, LDP was rewarded with a Cabinet post, despite our contesting three seats and winning only one. Subsequently, our former president, Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat, became Sabah chief minister in 2001, under the rotation system.

His (Tan Sri Chong) term expired in 2003, and it was then taken over by Datuk Seri Musa Aman from Umno. Then, when Pak Lah (Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) became prime minister in October 2003, the rotation system was scrapped, with Datuk Seri Musa continuing as chief minister.

"This agreed principle went unbroken until recently, when the LDP-elected representatives were not nominated to state Cabinet positions. The delegates will raise this issue, as they want the equilibrium to be restored. If not, it's likely to be seen as not fulfilling the promises," Liew told Bernama in an interview.

He said, despite some differences, he still believed that the top state leadership in Sabah "will not be clouded in its judgment" or "losing sight on this very important principle of power sharing" agreed upon since 1994.

"LDP has been loyal and dedicated in its struggle with BN since day-one when our party was formed in 1989. We never quit or withdrew from BN. I may be seen as vocal in our stand, but we do it for the interest of Sabah," he added.

Liew said that handing over a Cabinet post to Gerakan on the LDP ticket and, later, the handing over to PBS, the deputy chief minister's position, had created an imbalance as LDP members felt this power-sharing arrangement had not been honoured and, therefore, must be addressed.

After the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) announced it had quit BN on Sept 17, 2008, its quota for the Sabah deputy chief minister post was handed over to LDP where, subsequently, its first-term assemblyman, Datuk Peter Pang, was appointed to the post by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

However, Pang left the party at the end of August last year and joined Gerakan on March 15, this year, with his state ministerial position being retained, despite strong objections by LDP, which argued that Gerakan should not gain state Cabinet positions through the back door.

Later, LDP was also stunned by Musa's decision to appoint PBS deputy president-cum-state resources development and information technology minister Datuk Yee Moh Chai as deputy chief minister, replacing Pang, which the party described as a bad precedent.

During the interview, Liew also explained that it was only natural for the party to retain its claim to the seats that were allocated to SAPP after the latter withdrew from BN.

"I believe Chinese voters require a familiar party which can protect their interests and gain maximum support for BN. To allow a non-Sabah-based Chinese party to contest these seats is a very risky move. It would be an agenda item for the opposition," he said.

He noted, in the last general election, LDP won all four seats it contested -- a parliament seat and three state seats. These seats are the Sandakan parliamentary seat (V. K. Liew) and state seats Tanjung Kapor (Kudat), Merotai (Tawau) and Karamunting (Sandakan).

"All new faces were fielded in the three state seats allocated to LDP and LDP won all three seats comfortably, as Barisan swept 61 out of the 62 state seats.

Secretary-general Teo Chee Kang won the Tanjung Kapor seat, Pang Nyuk Ming (Merotai) and then Peter Pang (Karamunting), while I won back the Sandakan parliamentary seat," he said.

Therefore, he said, in the next general election, a slate of young professionals were ready to take charge and represent the people and party interests.

"However, the selection of winnable candidates must come from a winnable party. There are voters who vote for the party. Therefore, in my selection of a winnable candidate, the candidate must be willing and able. Not those who are only willing, but not able. Winnable must be willing and able," he repeated.

Liew said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also BN deputy chairman, would officiate the Oct 30 party congress.

"Since LDP was formed in 1989, we have already held our congress 22 times. We have also held it for the second time in Sandakan. We expect 30 divisions with 650 delegates, plus 330 observers, to attend our congress.

"Invitations have been extended to all BN component parties, including the Sabah chief minister. It would be a very important congress for us, as the delegates want the party to restore the balance for the common cause," he said.

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