

Penang duo to be punished for not voting

(STAR 25 NOV 2002)

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KUALA LUMPUR: Action will "surely" be taken against the two Barisan Nasional assemblymen who abstained from voting against a DAP motion so as to prevent a bad precedent for the coalition, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"I cannot say now what the punishment should be. But some action will be taken - surely enough," said the Deputy Prime Minister.

Abdullah said there was no such thing as abstaining from voting.

"They have to vote whether they oppose or not. In this instance, it means they did not vote to support Barisan," he told reporters after opening the Indian Progressive Front's 10th general assembly here yesterday.

Abdullah said the assemblymen would be allowed to explain their actions.

He said they could either do this after being informed of the action against them at appeal stage or after being issued a show-cause letter.

"Or at this stage, if they want to send in a report on their reasons, we will not stop them from doing so," he said.

He said he welcomed MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik's intention to meet him on this matter.

Asked whether MCA was trying to bargain its way through the issue, Abdullah said he did not want to predict what the party wanted to do.

He said a decision would be made after he discussed the matter with Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

On Thursday, Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) abstained from voting on a motion to defer the RM1bil Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project.

The case of the two Barisan assemblymen not supporting the ruling party during an opposition motion is unprecedented in the state assembly.

State Barisan whip Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said although some Barisan assemblymen had misgivings about certain projects in the past, they had always supported the coalition.

Dr Hilmi said Tan and Lim had defied a directive of state Barisan chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon during a pre-council meeting on Nov 9 that all assemblymen oppose the DAP motion.