

PM: Move to abstain a serious matter

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described the move by two BN members to abstain when a vote was taken on a motion in the Penang State Assembly as a very serious matter and hinted of disciplinary action.

"Yes, it is a very serious thing. We will have to look into the incident and we will make a decision on that," he said on his return from Paris.

"It shows a lack of party discipline."

When asked if any disciplinary action will be taken against the two assemblyman, Lim Boo Chang (BN-Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (BN-Jawi), Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said: "Possible."

Mahathir was also asked to comment on the claim that their move to abstain was taken in the interests of their constituents and reflected the wishes of the people they represent.

"It means that the BN is not the voice of the people," he said.

"If I need to ask my constituents, every time a vote is taken (in the Dewan Rakyat), I'll have to go back to ask my constituents."

Mahathir was also asked about the statement by Tan who was reported to have said that her decision was based on her conscience.

"If everybody's vote is based on conscience, there'll be no party. When seeking to join, to contest, (they'll) ask for the support of the party. After having won, they want to be independent. If the party has no support, can the party win?"

"How many independent (candidates) have won in Malaysia. It's the party that wins, meaning that we're banking on the party. We'll have to accept the discipline

of the party," he said.

Meanwhile, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik is expected to meet Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to settle the issue.

In Kota Baru, party vice-president Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said he is confident the matter will be settled in the context of the BN family because both are strong supporters of the BN.

"We, the BN components,

need not discuss openly or through the media," Fong said. "What's important is that we all support the BN."

Abdullah had indicated that the two assemblymen may be sacked from the BN for refusing to vote against an opposition motion asking the government to postpone the Penang Outer Ring Road project.

Fong said he did not want to speculate on why the two abstained from voting.