

Expulsion of MCA duo will not solve PORR issue

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POLITICIANS from Penang have always grumbled about the difficulties in dealing with their constituents. The islanders expect their elected representatives not only to be good in constituency service but also in speaking up.

No complaint is too small or too big for the voters. And certainly they do not want Barisan Nasional state assemblymen to be yes-men in the state assembly.

This predicament must have been too familiar for MCA representatives Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Kramat), who are both outspoken.

The two decided to remain inside the House to make their stand on the controversial construction of the proposed RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR).

Instead of taking the easy way out by leaving the House, they abstained from voting against the DAP motion.

thod of counting.

For the two embroiled in the current brouhaha, there have been calls for their expulsion from the MCA which is certainly harsh, even if there is a need to impress upon Barisan politicians to toe the party line.

As the Barisan leaders decide on the appropriate form of action to be meted out against the two, Penangites are confident the federal government will now pay more attention to the voices of the Penangites on the project.

Penangites and visitors must admit that the traffic congestion in Penang has worsened. The state government cannot allow the situation to continue as plans are being made to build a second bridge to the mainland.

The ring road, for whatever reason, has become a serious and emotional issue as houses would need to be demolished to make way for the road. Others complained of highways located next to their house and tolls being imposed.

The action of the MCA duo sparked off an uproar with Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon demanding their expulsion from the Barisan Nasional for breach of party discipline.

There have been questions over whether there was serious application of the whip and whether the DAP motion was given due attention with some assemblymen saying the bell was not even rung.

Besides three MCA assemblymen outside, at least one Umno representative was outside while one Gerakan assemblyman was away attending another function.

Still, the MCA duo must obviously have understood the repercussions of their action, irrespective of whether they were briefed by the Barisan whip, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Hilmi Yahya.

They may consider abstention a grey area and unless they had been specifically instructed to vote against an opposition motion or bill, they may have felt it was not wrong to abstain.

The stand taken by the two may be peculiar to people unfamiliar with Penang politics.

There have been others before these two defiant politicians. Barisan representatives who regularly spoke up against the state government included Chin Nyok Soo, Seow Hun Khim and Datuk Tan Gim Hwa.

The parliamentary practice of most democracies is to have a voice vote to dispose of a motion. Division voting, where members of the House have to make known their individual stand, is usually reserved for amendments to the constitution.

But there is nothing to prevent any assemblyman from demanding division voting to be taken as the Standing Orders in the Penang state assembly allow such a me-

Many Penangites, especially the lower income group in the DAP-held Tanjung constituency, still blame the state government for the repeal of the Rent Control Act, pointing out how the pre-war houses in the inner city have been abandoned, although it was a federal government decision.

Rightly or wrongly, many Penangites, who are perhaps not properly informed of the benefits of PORR, have protested against the project, through the state assemblymen.

With over 30,000 signatures reportedly collected from the people in the campaign against PORR, the Barisan should not close its eyes to the potential political cost of the project.

Expelling the two from Barisan would not remove the PORR issue. It could even help the three opposition assemblymen from DAP, Parti Keadilan Nasional and PAS to exploit the matter.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said the two face possible action but wants to read the reports first.

The Barisan, which has been sensitive to the feelings of the people, has time and again risen to the occasion by respecting the will and wishes of the people.

In Selangor, the Barisan government moved the proposed incinerator from Puchong to a forest reserve area following public objections while Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohamed Khir Toyo shelved a plan to build a market on a football field.

We must recognise that the voters of today no longer want projects to be pushed down their throats. The PORR will certainly help solve much of the traffic problem and Penangites need to be informed and educated about how it can benefit them.