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Controversy looms over stand of MCA reps

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The two MCA Assemblymen's refusal to join other Barisan Nasional backbenchers to oppose a motion tabled by the Opposition at the Penang Legislative Assembly yesterday looks set to develop into a full-blown controversy.

While BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat accused Lim Boo Chang (MCA-Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (MCA-Jawi) of having an ulterior motive for refusing to vote against the motion, two MCA vice-presidents came to their defence.

State Barisan Nasional whip Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said in Penang today that he would submit his report to BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday.

On the report to the Prime Minister, Hilmi said it would be on what transpired during the voting.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon gave a written report to Dr Mahathir's deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, yesterday.

Mohamed said it was obvious that the two had their own interests as they remained seated during a standing count.

"The two must remember that they were given the seat to stand as wakil rakyat for the constituencies by the party. It is only right that they should abide by the BN rule.

"They should be loyal to BN, their duty is to help implement policies of the Government and to carry out the instructions of the BN Government while they are serving as wakil rakyat.

"When they do things behind BN, they disturb the smooth running of the Government. We do not want people to perceive that there is a problem in Penang MCA. Therefore, disciplinary action must be taken against them," said Mohamed.

An ultimatum would be issued to the two who had refused to vote against a motion tabled by an Opposition member to postpone the construction of the proposed RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road.

MCA vice-president Datuk Chan Kong Choy said Lim and Tan should be given an opportunity to present their case.

Chan said the MCA leadership should give the two a chance to explain. "Both are seasoned politicians and have been all along supportive of the BN. There must be a reason why they refused to vote against the motion."

Although Lim had declined to comment further, Tan said she would rather quit than be forced to vote against her conscience because as a responsible elected representative, she was empowered by the people to protect their interests.

Abdullah yesterday said they faced possible expulsion from BN as their action was a serious breach of discipline.

Another MCA vice-president, Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, said the MCA would wait for a report on the incident by Penang MCA chairman Wong Kam Hoong before taking any action.

"We must get more details. This is quite surprising as the two are very loyal to the party and the BN."

Meanwhile, the Central Ad Hoc No PORR committee appealed to national and State leaders not to act against the two.

"Wakil rakyat are supposed to voice the concerns of the rakyat, and the two Assemblymen should not be punished for speaking up," said committee co-ordinator Linda Lim.

