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Umno wants case of errant MCA duo brought before BN council

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Umno supreme council wants the case of the two errant Penang MCA assemblymen to be brought to the Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting next month, to determine the disciplinary action MCA should take against them.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, announcing this today, said that MCA must accept that the duo had contested under the BN banner in the 1999 general election.

"Although it is the responsibility of MCA to act against its members, we feel that since they represent BN, the coalition must play its role in determining whether the indefinite suspension is sufficient or otherwise."

He said Umno wanted the BN supreme council meeting to make a final decision as it was a serious matter.

Dr Mahathir said this after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters here.

He was commenting on the decision by the MCA presidential council on Monday to suspend indefinitely Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi), who abstained from voting on a motion tabled by the Opposition in the State Assembly to postpone the construction of the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road.

Dr Mahathir said the Umno supreme council decision today differed from its recommendation at last month's meeting that the duo be expelled.

"This is because we have received some new information on the issue which will be forwarded to the BN supreme council.

"We will abide by any decision made by the coalition."

Dr Mahathir declined to detail the "new information", saying that Umno did not want it to be a subject of discussion which could influence the BN stand.

Asked whether there was any suggestion that the duo should vacate their seats, Dr Mahathir replied: "We will bring this up."

On whether there was an urgent need for BN to look into the suspension, Dr Mahathir said:

"This is a question of principle and discipline."

Later, several Umno supreme council members, approached for their comments, said that the MCA's "indefinite suspension" term was misleading and could be manipulated to enable the two assemblymen to get off lightly.

They said the sentence was too lenient and urged MCA to come out with a proper time-frame, which should be at least until the next general election.