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MCA mum over move to refer duo to BN council

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Barisan Nasional component party leaders today had mixed reaction to the Umno supreme council's decision to let the coalition's supreme council determine the disciplinary action that MCA should take against its two errant Penang State Assembly members.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the matter was a BN issue and it was only proper for the BN supreme council to decide.

"We have to put our house in order. If this issue is not handled well, it will drag us down in the future," Muhammad said when contacted.

Yesterday, the Umno supreme council decided that the matter would be brought to the BN supreme council to determine the disciplinary action MCA should take against the two errant Assembly members Tan Cheng Lian (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat).

MCA leaders, when contacted, were tight-lipped over the Umno supreme council's decision, but many felt that Umno had softened its stand over the issue.

An MCA vice-president said from previously insisting that Tan and Lim be sacked, Umno now wants the matter to be referred to the BN supreme council.

"Let the issue rest. BN leaders should not be making unnecessary statements that would make this issue more complicated," he added.

A Penang MCA leader said the issue now had abated with the Umno supreme council's decision.

He added this also showed that Umno was a reasonable party and was open to other views. This was because Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said that the party now wanted to let the BN supreme council handle the issue after receiving "new information".

Gerakan secretary-general Chia Kwang Chye reiterated the party's stand in wanting to forward its views on the issue to the BN supreme council during its meeting next month.

"Gerakan will table a report during the BN supreme council meeting. The report will contain whatever proof on what president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said earlier."

But a Gerakan leader denied that the Umno supreme council's decision showed a softening of Umno's stand over the issue.

"I think it is Umno's tactical move. Umno is probably sending a polite and diplomatic message to MCA," said the leader.

On Nov 29, the Umno supreme council had recommended the sacking of Tan and Lim for abstaining in an Opposition motion to postpone the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road project in the State Legislative Assembly.

The MCA presidential council, acting on recommendations of the MCA disciplinary board, had suspended the duo's membership indefinitely.