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MCA council to decide on duo's fate

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The MCA presidential council will meet on Tuesday to decide the fate of MCA duo Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi).

While there have been recommendations from within the MCA and other Barisan Nasional component parties for strict action to be taken against the duo, several senior leaders in the party insisted that Lim and Tan were not acting on their own and had been instructed to abstain from voting.

"We have received reliable information that the duo, among other Penang MCA wakil rakyat, were instructed not to vote or stay away when the motion was passed," a senior party leader said.

However, he said there was still insufficient evidence for them to go public and it would be a matter of time before the truth was revealed.

"We are also not sure why the duo were instructed to abstain though there have been rumours that their action was aimed at trying to discredit the Penang leadership under Gerakan vice-president Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon," he said.

A veteran MCA leader, meanwhile, said the council, due to pressure from BN component parties, would likely expel Lim and Tan.

He said a precedent on such behaviour was set by Gerakan when it expelled its Sabah protem committee chairman Datuk Kong Hong Ming (Kudat) in 1996 when he failed to support a Sabah-BN sponsored Bill.

"This coupled with the fact that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is BN chairman, had said Umno strongly recommended that the duo be expelled from MCA and BN, would greatly influence the presidential council's decision," the leader said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik had said yesterday the party would consider Umno's recommendation.

Lim and Tan had abstained from voting on a motion tabled by Law Heng Kiang (DAP-Batu Lanchang) on the proposed RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road.

Since then, several leaders from the BN component parties, including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had described their action as a serious breach of discipline.

However, an MCA Youth leader said expelling Lim and Tan may not be the best option as this would paint a negative picture in the eyes of the community. "It was a different situation (when Gerakan expelled Kong in 1996). Then, Gerakan was not plagued by any crisis.

"However, in MCA, the situation is different. The problem of divisions in the party is not fully settled and the last thing we need is the expulsion of two assemblymen to weaken the confidence of the Chinese in the party," he said.

He urged BN component parties to be more understanding, considering the general election was not far off and the party needed all the strength and support to face it.