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MCA duo will face action, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The two Penang Barisan Nasional backbenchers have set a bad precedent by abstaining from voting on a DAP motion in the State Legislative Assembly on Thursday and some form of action must be taken, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Stressing that such action should not be tolerated, Abdullah who is also BN deputy chairman, said disciplinary action against the duo is a must.

"When you are present at a State Assembly sitting and a motion is tabled ... you have to vote. They (the two MCA elected representatives) have to vote, you either support or object ...there is no such thing as abstaining," Abdullah said.

Speaking after opening the Indian Progressive Front's 10th annual general assembly at Dewan Merdeka in Putra World Trade Centre here, he said that the issue would be brought to the attention of Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad before any action is taken.

Told of MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik's intention to meet him pertaining to the matter, Abdullah said that he welcomed this.

Asked if the two MCA backbenchers - Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) - would be allowed to state their case before taking any action against them, he said they would most probably be issued show-cause letters.

"But if they want to explain themselves before we issue the letters ...it is also okay," Abdullah said.

Lim and Tan abstained when the vote was taken on a DAP motion calling for the deferment of the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road project.

The following day, Abdullah warned that both Tan and Lim could be expelled from the coalition for their act.

Later in Kepala Batas, Abdullah said he was confident the ruckus created by Lim and Tan would not create a rift among BN component members, especially between Gerakan and MCA.

He said all would be well if the problem was tackled according to the BN constitution.

"This problem must also be tackled fairly and accordingly," he said after chairing the Tasek Gelugor Umno division meeting today.

In Pekan, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the two assemblymen should have placed BN's interest above the rest.

"This should not have happened. As government supporters, we should give priority to the interest of the party.

"The discipline in the party is also a reflection of our loyalty to upkeep and support all decisions made by the party," he said.

In Genting Highlands, MCA vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng said BN leaders should refrain from commenting on the issue of the conduct of the duo.

"I don't think it is right for the Gerakan president (Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik) to make such strong comments on the case.

"Such comments make it appear as if there is a dispute between MCA and Gerakan although it's only a disciplinary problem within BN."

Speaking after closing the 10th Dynabook ICT competition here today, Chua said he would also advise the duo not to make any statement on the matter but explain the issue to the party leadership.

"I believe the two should be given a chance to give their explanation in defence for having done what they did."

In Penang, the DAP said today it was prepared to take in the two if they were expelled from the BN.

State DAP chairman Chow Kon Yeow said Lim and Tan could consider continuing their political career in the DAP.

"Penang DAP has no objection to them joining our party to continue their struggle if they wish to," he said when commenting on the possible expulsion of the duo from the BN.

Tan and Lim were not available for comment on the DAP offer.

Meanwhile, Law Heng Kiang (DAP-Batu Lanchang) hit out at the BN assemblymen who were not in the House when the vote on his motion was taken, saying they should not run away from their responsibilities as wakil rakyat.

"They should not give all sorts of excuses like saying they were taken by surprise or did not know in advance about my motion on the PORR issue, because it was not an emergency motion," he said.

Law said he had filed the motion with the State Assembly on Oct 16, two days before the deadline set by the Speaker's office, and all assemblymen had been notified.