

12 JUL 2003

MCA-Assemblemen

DR M CONSULTED ON REINSTATEMENT OF TWO ASSEMBLYMEN, SAYS MCA CHIEF

KUALA LUMPUR, July 12 (Bernama) -- The MCA had consulted Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad before lifting the suspension of two of its state assemblymen in Penang, MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said today.

Ong said he had personally met Dr Mahathir to get his views before bringing the matter to the MCA Presidential Council meeting last Thursday.

At the meeting, the Presidential Council decided to lift the suspension of Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi), which was imposed on Dec 16 last year.

"He (Dr Mahathir) agreed. I informed the Prime Minister before MCA (Presidential Council) met. Of course, I had sought the views of the BN chairman; I would not have done it without consultation," he told reporters after launching a book entitled "Shui Qing Shi Zi Jian" (The Rocks Are Visible In The Clear Water) at Wisma MCA here.

The book is a collection of articles on current issues written by Loh Seng Kok, who was political secretary to former MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Ong was asked to comment on Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's statement that he would have no objection to the MCA's decision to lift the suspension if it had been discussed with the state BN.

Abdullah, who is BN deputy chairman, said MCA should understand that the decision to suspend the two was made by the BN, and as such any move to change it should be referred to the coalition, especially at the state level.

"I respect Pak Lah's (Abdullah's) statement, and when making this decision (reinstatement) MCA had written a letter to the top BN leadership, including its chairman, deputy chairman and secretary-general," Ong said.

He said a copy of the letter was addressed to Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who is also Penang BN chairman.

"The letter, dated yesterday, has been issued and might take time to reach (the addressee). And at the same time, I have informed Tok Mat (Tan Sri Mohamad Rahmat, BN secretary-general) and Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik of this matter by telephone," he said.

Ong said he decided to inform Mohamad and Dr Lim because at that time Dr Koh was in Japan on an official visit and could not be contacted.

"I also tried to contact Dr Koh this morning after learning that he has returned to Penang, but was told that he was attending a ceremony in conjunction with Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas' 65th birthday," he said.

Asked if he foresaw problems from fellow BN component parties on the decision to lift the suspension, Ong said: "If everybody took it in good faith, thinking of BN moving toward one, I am confident the true spirit in BN would prevail."

Lim and Tan were suspended indefinitely for abstaining from voting against a DAP motion in the State Assembly in November to defer the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project.

Asked on the progress made by the party's committee appointed by the him and his deputy, Datuk Chan Kong Choy, to resolve the internal problems in the Youth movement, Ong said it was progressing well.

He was confident that a solution could be reached on matters pertaining to the state Youth chief posts for Penang, Federal Territory and Negeri

Sembilan.

"With the new spirit and new scenario in MCA, we can come to some consensus not too far from now," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AT MFJ YBY