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BN supreme council endorses MCA move on Lim, Tan

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The Barisan Nasional supreme council today endorsed the MCA presidential council's decision to reinstate the membership of its Penang elected representatives, Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi).

The duo were suspended on Dec 16 last year for abstaining in an opposition motion in the State Legislative Assembly.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the decision was accepted by all BN component parties, including Gerakan which had initially criticised the MCA decision as being too lenient.

"Lim and Tan are now back as the Barisan Nasional Datuk Keramat and Jawi State assemblymen respectively," Dr Mahathir who is BN chairman said after chairing a two-hour supreme council meeting.

On Nov 21 last year, Lim and Tan had abstained in an Opposition motion to postpone the RM1.01 billion Penang Outer Ring Road project at the Penang Legislative Assembly.

This led to criticism from BN component parties, especially Gerakan, which dominates the Penang Government, as the two had allegedly breached the coalition's code of conduct.

The Umno supreme council had asked for the sacking of the two assemblymen, but later decided to let the BN leadership decide on the matter.

The MCA presidential council "suspended indefinitely" Lim and Tan after an internal disciplinary inquiry.

Earlier, before holding the Press conference, Dr Mahathir welcomed Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Datuk Chan Kong Choy as the MCA's new president and deputy president respectively.

Dr Mahathir also expressed his gratitude and appreciation to former MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik who resigned on May 23, this year for his contributions to the BN and the nation.

On the ongoing crisis in the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, Dr Mahathir said the supreme council was awaiting a decision from the Registrar of Societies before any further action.

"That is why there are no PBDS representatives here today," he said.

The PBDS leadership crisis erupted after the sudden resignation of Datuk Amar Leo Moggie as party president two months ago.

In line with the party constitution, the then deputy president Datuk Seri Daniel Tajem was automatically elevated as the new party leader.

However, Tajem's elevation was not recognised by a faction led by party information chief Datuk Seri Dr James Masing.

Tajem consolidated his position when he and his committee members were returned unopposed when nominations closed several days before the party triennial general assembly in Kuching in early July.

But on July 24, Dr Masing's faction held their own general assembly in Bintulu and some 212 party branches supported Dr Masing as president with Datuk Sng Chee Hua as his deputy.

As a result, the party has two presidents and two separate supreme councils.

On the deregistration and membership status of the Sarawak National Party, Dr Mahathir said there was no final decision yet from the court.

SNAP was in the limelight last year when it was deregistered by the ROS on grounds that it contravened its own constitution and failed to resolve

the leadership crisis.

The Court of Appeal, however, allowed the party's long serving president Datuk Amar James Wong and secretary-general Datuk Justine Jinggut to appeal against the ROS order.

The court also temporarily lifted the order until the final disposal of Wong's and Jinggut's appeal.

Environment and Public Health Minister Datuk William Mawan Ikom, a former SNAP vice-president, and his faction then formed Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party, which had since been admitted into BN.

"For SNAP to be accepted into the BN again, they must make a new application and we will then decide," said Dr Mahathir.

On the BN's position in facing the next general election, the Prime Minister said the situation was much better now and the coalition had resolved most problems faced by its component parties.

"I am confident all other minor problems among the component parties will be ironed out long before the general election.

"The BN is now well-accepted and the rakyat appreciate all that we have done for the country and are very friendly towards the coalition.

"I am confident the BN stands a much better chance in the general election this time compared to the last, in 1999," he added.

Asked if the BN supreme council discussed the proposal to stop its elected representatives from party hopping, Dr Mahathir said the component parties agreed that it would be very disruptive and should not be done.