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Follow procedures, Abdullah tells MCA

M.K. Megan; Brenda Lim

SEPANG, Sun. - The MCA has to follow proper procedures to have the suspension of the two Penang assemblymen lifted, including submitting a request to the Barisan Nasional supreme council, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the suspension was imposed by the BN supreme council and only it had the powers to lift it, not the MCA presidential council.

"What Ong Ka Ting did (on behalf of the MCA presidential council) was to get the individual opinions of some BN leaders, including those of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and myself, about lifting the suspension.

"Individually, they (BN leaders) agreed to the suspension being lifted, myself included. We all want to see a strong MCA. But the procedures have to be followed.

"Although all the BN leaders are members of the BN supreme council they cannot make decisions individually," he said in reply to questions from the Press upon his return from a three-day visit to Japan.

Ong announced yesterday that Dr Mahathir had agreed to reinstate Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat).

In Ipoh, Ong said today the two assemblymen had learnt their lesson after being suspended for almost seven months and would "definitely toe the line".

"MCA is confident that they will not repeat the mistake," he said.

He said MCA had to revoke its suspension of the two before it could refer the matter to the BN supreme council.

He also said it was the BN supreme council's prerogative to discuss the matter and make a decision, adding that no date had been fixed for such a discussion.

MCA deputy president Datuk Chan Kong Choy said the party lifted the suspension in good faith and in the interests of BN, especially in Penang.

"Now we have a more powerful team of assemblymen from BN, whom we think can serve the people better," he said, giving his assurance that the two would support the State BN and State Government.

Chan expressed confidence Penang Chief Minister and State BN chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon would view the development positively.

"We look forward to the State Government giving its assistance so that they can serve their constituents more effectively," he said.

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

They were "suspended indefinitely" by MCA on Dec 16 after an internal disciplinary inquiry.

On Jan 7, the BN supreme council endorsed the MCA decision and said that the council would decide on the length of suspension.

Earlier, Koh said the State BN had not been informed of the matter. He said that although the two had been reinstated by their party, the BN supreme council would decide on their status as State assemblymen.