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Ong: MCA followed procedures in reinstating duo

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - MCA followed procedures when reinstating its two Penang assemblymen, party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said today.

He said the party first sought the opinion of the Barisan Nasional leadership, including chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Prime Minister, on the status of Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) and Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi).

After Dr Mahathir agreed to the lifting of the suspension, the MCA's presidential council met last Thursday to reinstate the duo.

"I briefed Pak Lah (Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is the BN deputy chairman) this morning. He is agreeable to what the MCA is doing," said Ong, who is also Housing and Local Government Minister.

Ong said the party had written to BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat informing him of the council's decision and requesting the coalition's supreme council to endorse MCA's decision.

He was responding to Abdullah's statement yesterday that MCA had to follow procedures, including submitting a request to the coalition's supreme council, when lifting the suspension.

Abdullah had said this at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport upon his return from a three-day working visit to Japan.

Thanking Abdullah for his advice, Ong said the procedure of reinstating the two assemblymen was similar to their suspension effected by the presidential council last Dec 16.

"I alone cannot go to the BN supreme council to ask for the duo's suspension to be lifted. The decision must first be made by the MCA," he added.

The MCA presidential council reinstated Tan and Lim after a seven-month suspension, a decision the council said would help the duo perform their duties better as BN elected representatives.

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

This drew criticism from BN component parties, especially Gerakan, which said the two had breached the coalition's code of conduct.

The MCA presidential council subsequently "suspended indefinitely" Lim and Tan on Dec 16 after an internal disciplinary inquiry.

On Jan 7, the BN supreme council endorsed MCA's decision and said the duration of the suspension would be decided by the BN council.

Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who is also State BN chairman, had expressed surprise over MCA's decision to lift the suspension as the Penang BN was not informed of the matter.