

Sports betting: It was for cabinet to decide, not Umno
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MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek has expressed concern that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's decision to allow the Umno supreme council to reject the proposal to legalise sports betting as a dangerous precedent.

He said that the move should rightfully be decided by the cabinet and not Umno, as it would create the impression that BN component parties were subservient to Umno.

NONE "We feel disappointed... It should have been decided at the cabinet level, so that every component party can voice its views," said Chua (right), during a special interview with selected news organisations at the MCA headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

On June 25, Najib announced that the Umno supreme council had unanimously rejected the federal government proposal to issue a sports betting licence to Ascot Sports Sdn Bhd, owned by tycoon Vincent Tan.

The about turn was unexpected as BN component parties such as MCA, MIC, PPP and LDP have openly supported the federal government proposal, which was met by widespread public criticism.

NONE Chua was quick to swing into damage control mode the day following Najib's (left) announcement, stating that MCA "respected" the decision.

Conditional support?

During the interview today, Chua brought up the sports betting topic without being provoked directly, when answering a question about public perception that MCA was subservient to Umno.

Chua did not deny that public perception was such, but denied MCA had supported the idea of sports betting, instead blaming the media for misinterpreting his earlier statements.

"No one loves gambling. If the government want to legalised the sports betting, there should be proper regulations in place to check illegal bookies.

"Proper education on gambling ills must also be a precursor, along with a special body to utilise tax collection gaming activities, he said.

Despite repeated attempts to clarify with Chua if MCA was expressing "conditional support", he merely repeated his earlier answer.