

**Ahmad Ismail opts out of Bukit Bendera Umno contest**  
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Controversial Penang politician Ahmad Ismail will not re-contest the Bukit Bendera Umno chief's post when the division meets this Sunday after it was twice postponed.

At a press conference at the Umno headquarters in Tanjung Bungah today, he said that he would be taking a one-year leave from politics.

Ahmad told journalists that the postponement of the division's annual general meeting was a "blessing in disguise" as it gave him time to think things over.

"I ponder over it thoroughly (semasak-masaknya) on whether the comeback of Ahmad Ismail as Bukit Bendera division chief would bring strength to Umno and BN," he said.

NONE "I believe my comeback will no doubt bring strength to Umno Bukit Bendera, but whether it will bring strength to BN - that I had to think for a long, long time."

The Penang Umno strongman said his decision not to re-contest his post was in line with Prime Minister Najib Razak's 1Malaysia concept and to ensure that both MCA and Gerakan will be able to recover lost Chinese support.

According to Ahmad, he had met "eye to eye" with Najib for about five or six times and was aware of the prime minister's priority, which is to foster unity among the people.

"Don't forget, Najib is my boss and I am his 'anak buah' (subordinate). If I do not give my support to make 1Malaysia successful and jeopardise his efforts, I have to rethink about making a comeback," he said.

He said that after meeting the premier to discuss about party issues, he had decided that he would not pursue the matter and go on a year long hiatus.

He said he has met Gerakan leaders and they have pledged their support. Thus, he said there should no longer be tensions between the two parties.

He nevertheless said that he will continue as the "de facto advisor" for the Bukit Bendera Umno division.

Advice to BN leaders

While Ahmad stressed that there bound to be some contentious issues within the ruling coalition.

He however felt that these issues could be discussed in the spirit of BN given that the two predominantly Chinese parties - MCA and Gerakan - have decided to continue working with Umno.

Meanwhile, Ahmad dispensed some advice to his fellow BN leaders, saying that they must be prepared to go to the ground to meet the people before the general elections, widely speculated to be held next year.

"We have experienced the 'tsunami' in the last election, although my problem happened after that," he said.

"If there were tensions between Gerakan and Umno, that should not continue. It will not bring any good to the coalition," he added.

"I myself do not want to be an obstacle (batu penghalang) to MCA and Gerakan in their bid to win back support for the BN from the multiracial rakyat," he stressed.

## Racially-tinged remarks

It is believed that Ahmad's plan to return to power in Bukit Bendera was the reason for the unprecedented delay in the division meeting, he nevertheless insisted today that it was because a suitable venue could not be found.

Ahmad was suspended in September 2008 for three years following his racially-tinged statements on the Chinese community.

pinang umno tear up koh tsu koon photo 080908 zainol abidin hashimIt escalated when Ahmad made calls for Gerakan to leave BN, and his supporters reacted by tearing then chief minister and Gerakan president Dr Koh Tsu Koon's picture.

However, the Umno supreme council reinstated Ahmad last December.

In March, all 36 division committee members resigned to pave the way for fresh elections and for Ahmad to assume his former post.

That action has failed to bring him back to power.

Ahmad apologised for the en masse resignation of the Bukit Bendera executive committee, saying that he hoped it did not cause problems to the party's top leadership.

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