Ahmad: I'm taking one for the team
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Former Bukit Bendera Umno division chief Ahmad Ismail has denied being pressured into forgoing contest for his former position during the upcoming division annual general meeting on Aug 8.

Instead, he explains that he is making a sacrifice in order not to jeapordise efforts by BN component parties to regain support for the coalition.

“As a friend to BN component parties, I do not want to their efforts to regain support for the coalition to become complicated and difficult,” Ahmad told reporters.

“So it is better that I continue my rest (from politics). I still need to do other things,” he added.

Ahmad courted controversy when he was quoted by Sin Chew Daily of calling Chinese community "pendatang" (immigrants) during the Permatang Pauh by-election in 2008.

Following this, the author of the article was jailed without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for 24-hours while Ahmad was suspended from his Umno membership for three-years, which critics regard was just a slap on the wrist.

PM didn't make me do it

Ahmad also denied claims that he was requested by Umno top brass to stay away from the contest and noted that the right to choose the division's leadership lies solely with division members.

He adds that although he has met Prime Minister and Umno president Najib Abdul Razak recently, the latter did not instruct him to go on leave and avoid contest.

“What we have been discussing is how to get back the support (from the people),” he said.

“This is Najib's sincere efforts, I feel the era now is different from decades ago, his approach is different,” he added.

To a question, Ahmad said that despite the grassroots support, and backing from BN component parties, he decided to stay away from the contest because some still believe that he made racist statements in the past.

“The manipulation (of my statement) which happened in the past made me ask myself: Has the stigma been wiped out from (the minds) of all the people?” he asked.

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