

Gerakan acts behind the scene to 'control' Umno
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Gerakan might have played a role in ensuring that controversial Penang Umno politician Ahmad Ismail stays out of the political arena, at least until after the next general election.

NONE "We can control Umno from inside if it goes off tangent," Penang Gerakan chairperson told reporters at a press conference after officiating the Bukit Bendera annual general meeting at the party's headquarters in Jalan Macalister.

"We have been doing it all along, playing our role behind the scenes," added Teng, who was once considered for the post of Penang chief minister before the change of government in 2008.

When asked if the party had a hand in the Ahmad controversy, Teng said "I do not have to clarify anything, but in any issue, we play our role".

Ahmad, who is the former Bukit Bendera Umno chief dropped a bombshell recently when he said he will not be contesting for the division post.

Ahmad was suspended in September 2008 for three years following his allegedly racist statements against the Chinese community.

Links between Gerakan and Umno soured when Ahmad made calls for the former to leave the BN, and his supporters reacted by tearing then chief minister and party president Koh Tsu Koon's picture.

Meanwhile, Teng does not see the party's alliance with Umno as a liability although the latter has often been accused of playing the racial card.

He said Umno had extended the party an olive branch recently so that the two parties could continue to work together in the coming general elections.

He also blamed the politicians in Pakatan Rakyat for bringing up racial issues; for acting as if they were 'champions' of other races.

"When those in government raise racial sentiments, it is even more dangerous," he added.

Rising political heat

During his speech at the AGM, Teng warned that the political situation in the country was very tense especially the relationship between the different ethnic groups.

He said he was not exaggerating to say that the situation, if left unchecked, would soon "boil over" and everyone must play a role to diffuse the rising political heat.

"(Here, the situation) is being fanned, with oxygen and charcoal added. In no time, racial tensions will go out of control. By that time it would be too late," he cautioned.

NONETeng said Gerakan members must play the role of "fire extinguishers" especially in Penang where the racial balance - between Malays, Chinese and Indians - were almost equal.

He said Gerakan must play a role to achieve zero racism in our society, as put forward by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (left) recently.

However, he added, the party's effectiveness in playing this role depended very much on how strong and united the members were.

Teng was probably hinting at his own party that just yesterday began to show cracks, with a group rallying to initiate an emergency general meeting to topple him as state leader.

"If we are not united and keep fighting internally, we become weak and lose the bigger picture of our struggles," he said.

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