

Titivangsa Umno chief in damage-control bid
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Titivangsa Umno division chief Johari Abdul Ghani has apologised for the second time for his racially inflammatory speech, which was captured on video and has been heavily circulated over the Internet.

This is his second apology since Oct 28, when he posted an article on his blog claiming that the video clip was edited and a contentious quote taken out of context.

In a statement yesterday, which was carried by the Chinese newspapers, Johari said he had no intention of inciting racial feelings, offending or maligning any ethnic group or religion.

"To all who are offended by my speech, I sincerely apologise to all my Chinese and Indian friends," he said.

NONEJohari (left) and Umno were the subject of heavy condemnation following the airing of a video clip depicting him speaking at a closed-door discussion for Umno members at the Putra World Trade Centre in July.

"Gentlemen. If you secure 70 percent of the 32,000 Malay votes, then we won't need Chinese and Indian votes," Johari said in the video clip, triggering applause from his audience.

"If we want to win in Titivangsa, we want Malays (to vote for us). We want Malays. Don't bow down to the Chinese and Indians just because we want to win. Don't do it," he said.

'Taken out of context'

This issue has become a campaign matter in the Galas and Batu Sapi by-elections, where the Chinese make up significant numbers in both constituencies.

Johari's first apology appeared two days after the nomination process while the second apology was issued four days before polling day.

In his blog, Johari wrote on the issue, ostensibly as a response to a deluge of "unsolicited emails" he had received as a result of the video clip posted on YouTube.

He published one such email in full and provided a lengthy reply, claiming that his speech was taken out of context and his intention was to point out that had there been no split in Malay votes, that Umno merely needed 70 percent of Malay votes to win the Titivangsa parliamentary seat.

"It was not that I could care less about the Chinese and Indian voters... my main focus was the split in the Malay votes and how 70 percent of the Malay votes could secure the win.

"The speech was taken out of context and had you heard the entire speech during that closed door discussion, you would have arrived at a very much different conclusion and you will see that I am not a racist as I was made out to be," he said.

'I live in 1Malaysia'

He said he had, in the earlier part of his speech, explained that BN component parties were capable of engaging the Chinese and Indian voters.

However, his reply did not touch on his call for Umno not to "bow down" to Chinese and Indian voters.

He also said he was a believer in 1Malaysia, which he claimed was something he practised every day.

"You see, I am the managing director and a major shareholder of a public listed company. The chief executive officer of the company is an Indian.

"The director of sales is a Chinese, and so is the head of finance. The head of production is an Indian, and the various heads of departments are a mix of Malaysians, born and bred in this country of ours.

"I recognise and reward talents and performance when I see it. I live in 1Malaysia," Johari said.

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