

Penang Umno backs Ahmad, snubs Pak Lah
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Backed by all 13 Umno divisions from Penang, the embattled Bukit Bendera Umno division chief Ahmad Ismail today fervently defended his stand not to apologise for his alleged racist remarks against the Chinese community.

All Penang Umno divisions, including Prime Minister and Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Kepala Batas, fully supported Ahmad's stance, which erupted into a national furore since last week.

The Penang Umno's action today came as a snub against the prime minister who had earlier urged Ahmad to make an apology.

Abdullah, who is Penang Umno chief, is scheduled to have a meeting with the division leaders tomorrow in his home state.

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 01 Instead of apologising, the local Umno strongman today accused vernacular daily Sin Chiew Daily and its journalist for triggering the controversy by reporting his speech out of context, which was delivered during the recent Permatang Pauh by-election rally in Kampung Belah Dua on Aug 25.

"The newspaper and reporter were the ones who should apologise to me, my family, my friends, Umno and all Malaysians for misrepresenting the facts and wrongly reporting my statements," he said.

Ahmad also took a swipe at the so-called trial by media, which had publicly found him guilty without hearing his side of the story.

The packed press conference was unexpectedly held under a rather intimidating atmosphere with the presence of some 100 Umno members, mostly from Bukit Bendera division, and it was frequently punctuated by shouts of racial slurs and threats.

Social contract

Reading out a 16-page statement, Ahmad recollected his by-election rally speech and did not deny it contained the statement that "Chinese were immigrants squatting in this country".

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 04However, he argued the statement was taken out of context from a lengthy speech he had delivered to a largely Malay audience at the rally.

In his speech, Ahmad claimed he only touched on the "Chinese migration to this country" when narrating Malaysia's history and the social contract between the Malays and other races when the country attained independence.

His speech included a wide range of topics such as the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial

British, the immigration of Chinese and Indians to the country, May 13 racial riots, Malay special rights and privileges, the social contract, citizenship for non-Malays and New Economic Policy.

"What I said was a statement of facts which no one can refute.

"So it's not wrong if I were to mention those historical facts in public," he said, while criticising all those whom he described as "Chinese extremist leaders" for attacking him without first finding out the truth.

He said even though he had explained the content of his speech a day later, no newspapers, television channels or online portals have reported his clarification.

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 02Ahmad's statement became a controversy when several Chinese-based political parties, notably MCA and Gerakan, began lodging a series of police reports against the Umno leader.

Many have called on the Umno leadership to sack Ahmad from the party.

"It is the Chinese leaders who are causing this controversy, not me. What's wrong if a Malay leader touched, on or defended, Malay rights?" asked Ahmad.

'Gerakan can get out from BN'

Other local Umno leaders such as state secretary Azhar Ibrahim, Bukit Mertajam division chief Musa Syeikh Fadzir and Bayan Baru division chief Mohd Zain Omar joined Ahmad to rap those who objected to Ahmad's rally speech.

Azhar blasted the Sin Chew Daily journalist who first reported Ahmad's speech as 'idiotic', saying that "the reporter and the newspaper should be held responsible for inciting racial hatred and conflict".

Meanwhile, Ahmad also slammed Gerakan acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon as a "great liar and opportunist", and said Gerakan can always "get out from Barisan Nasional".

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 05He even claimed BN would not have lost in Penang in the last general election if not for the incompetency of former chief minister Koh and his party.

"MCA could have won more seats if not for Gerakan," he claimed.

He accused Koh and Gerakan of using him as a pawn to resurrect their waning credibility, position and relevance among the Chinese community.

In a clear sign of defiance and internal mutiny over the controversy, Musa hit out at the Umno top leadership for apologising on behalf of the party without checking the facts with Ahmad.

Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Najib Abdul Razak had already apologised over the issue to Chinese Malaysians on behalf of the party.

"The national leadership can have its own stand, but Penang divisional leaders have theirs.

"We fully back Ahmad on this issue," Musa told journalists, rejecting outright Najib's apologetic gesture.

'We can retaliate'

But the most intimidating threat came from former Bayan Lepas assemblyperson Mohd Zain, who warned "non-Malays to be extra careful with their deeds and words".

"Don't disturb and push the Malays too much. Don't think we are quiet.

"We can retaliate very aggressively," he thumped home amidst applause from supporters.

Mohd Zain rapped "Chinese and Hindus of blowing up Muslim conversion issues out of proportion while at the same time, being quiet on Christianity conversion issues".

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 03At the same time, Ahmad argued that he was neither a racist nor anti-Chinese.

The former municipal councillor, who is being investigated by the police under the Sedition Act, said he has many Chinese friends, both personal and business, all these years.

The press conference ended with a show of solidarity and strength from local Umno leaders, and shouts of 'Hidup Melayu' (long live Malays).

Earlier in the morning, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said it was up to Umno to demonstrate its "sincerity and honesty" in dealing with the matter.

"Umno leaders must prove that they are not hypocrites by taking a stern and firm action on Ahmad," the DAP secretary-general told the media.

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