

Gerakan ready to cut links with defiant Umno leader
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Barisan Nasional component party Gerakan has upped the ante in the Ahmad Ismail 'racial slur' controversy.

ahmad ismail umno bukit benderaThe party has today issued an ultimatum - that the Gerakan Bukit Bendera division will "disassociate itself" from the Umno division chief if he continues to refuse to apologise for his allegedly racist remarks.

"(We) will have nothing to do with Ahmad Ismail any more. We call upon all like-minded Malaysians to do the same," said Gerakan Penang secretary Dr Teng Hock Nan in a strongly-worded statement.

Teng described Ahmad's refusal to apologise as "a clear sign of disrespect and insubordination" to both the prime minister and deputy prime minister.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has earlier told Ahmad, a powerful local Umno leader, to apologise while Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak had said sorry on his behalf three days ago.

According to Teng, the defiance shown by Ahmad was a "slap in the face" for the top two leaders, who are Umno's president and deputy president respectively.

Ahmad was accused to have uttered seditious remarks describing the Chinese as "immigrants squatting in the country, thus were not entitled to equal rights in Malaysia" at a BN by-election rally late last month.

The former municipal councillor also questioned the Chinese community's willingness to share their wealth with other races.

In a clear snub against Abdullah, who is also Penang Umno chief, all 13 party divisions in the island state had yesterday thrown their support for Ahmad.

Calls for Gerakan to leave BN

Gerakan has demanded that action be taken against Ahmad.

teng hock nan"We urge the prime minister to take stern action without fear or favour against Ahmad, not only for his racist and extremist remark which jeopardises and threatens the existing racial unity and harmony in the country but also for his disrespect and insubordination to the prime minister and his leadership," said Teng.

Meanwhile, the party's Penang Youth wing called on Gerakan to withdraw from BN "immediately".

The state Gerakan Youth secretary, Oh Tong Keong, said the party should allow its members to vote on whether to remain in BN at the National Delegates Conference next month.

"If Umno not willing to listen and respect the views of other member parties, then it gives no reasons for Gerakan to continue working with Umno in BN," he said.

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