

Umno chieftain meets PM in Putrajaya
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Ahmad Ismail, the man at the centre of the 'racial slur' controversy, had a meeting with the country's top two leaders at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya today.

However, no immediate action has been taken against him as Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wanted to discuss the matter at the Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting which is scheduled to be held later today.

Also present at the closed-door meeting was Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Ahmad Ismail Putrajaya meet PM 090908 01 Ahmad, who is Bukit Bendera Umno chief, arrived at the premier's office at 12.50pm and emerged from the building at about 2.30pm. It was not known how long the actual meeting lasted.

Ahmad was accompanied by a dozen of supporters, among them were Penang Telok Bahang state assembly person Dr Hilmi Yahya and Bukit Mertajam Umno division chief Musa Sheikh Fadzir.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, a defiant Ahmad said he had explained his role on the ongoing controversy to Abdullah - who is also Penang Umno chief.

He insisted that the matter started with a vernacular daily misquoting him and accused Barisan Nasional component party Gerakan of using the issue to stir up racial sentiment.

Asked if Abdullah and Najib had found whether he was the perpetrator, Ahmad replied: "I don't see it, I don't think there is an issue arises from that angle."

Who is acting emotionally?

On whether his explanation was accepted, he said: "The prime minister gave his views but he acknowledged what I did was for the party. Moreover, I want to remind (everyone) that my speech was delivered to a Malay audience."

He also avoided answering a question on whether the premier backed him following his explanation.

Ahmad Ismail Umno Bukit Bendera Penang PC take down Koh Tsu Koon photo stunt 080908 03 "The prime minister has to be as fair as possible. He can't be on my side or (Gerakan acting president Dr Koh) Tsu Koon's side. The most important thing now is national security," he said.

The national furore started after Ahmad had apparently called Chinese Malaysians 'squatters in the country' and remained defiant despite repeated calls for him to apologise.

He defended his remarks, which was made during a rally at the Permatang Pauh by-election last month, arguing that he was merely citing historical facts.

However, yesterday Ahmad went one step further by warning the minority Chinese community not be like American Jews, who seek to control not just the economy by also political power.

Earlier today, two BN component parties - MCA and Gerakan - urged stern action to be taken against Ahmad while Penang Gerakan has cut its ties with state Umno.

Commenting on this, Ahmad was unfazed and blamed Koh, who is Penang BN chief, instead.

"Is that professional? He (Koh) is the state BN chief and he severed ties with Umno, how can he perform (his duty) like that? Who is acting emotionally now?" he questioned.

'Need to capitalise on rise of Malays'

Defending himself further, Ahmad said it was up to every individual to accept his statement or otherwise.

"Certain people like my statement. The Chinese may have called me racist but the Malays called me a nationalist, (and) that I was merely defending my own race.

ahmad ismail putrajaya meet pm 090908 02"What I see is that (out of this controversy we see) the rise of the Malays and I think we should capitalise on this strength and the support from the Malays - the professionals and civil servants - they are with me," said a smiling Ahmad.

He also argued that the BN component parties themselves are racially-based party to begin with.

"Umno itself is a racist, MCA is racist, MIC is also racist. The parties represent their own races but of course, in a nationalist context," he said.

Ahmad, who said he has garnered support from the Malays from all over the country, claimed the grassroots were unhappy with BN top leadership who had apologised on his behalf.

Although he did not name names, it was clear that he was referring to Najib who made an apology over the issue. Abdullah has also told Ahmad to apologise but to no avail.

"I am not angry but the people on the ground are angry over the apology. They told me not to apologise because this is (about) the dignity of our race," he said before leaving in his black Mercedes.