

BN to let Umno decide on Ahmad
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Barisan Nasional component parties today resolved to let Umno decide on the action to be taken against its errant Bukit Bendera division chief, Ahmad Ismail, over his alleged racial comments.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Umno supreme council members would convene a meeting at noon tomorrow specially to discuss how to deal with Ahmad.

The decision was made after a three-hour Barisan supreme council meeting chaired by Abdullah, who heads both the Barisan and Umno.

"BN component party leaders have expressed their disappointment and anger over Ahmad's statements. I can say all have expressed that they cannot accept Ahmad's views and in fact reject it in total," Abdullah told a press conference.

"They want action to be taken against Ahmad but because Ahmad is an Umno member, only Umno have the authority to deal with him and present component party leaders have admitted that this is the right procedure and want Umno to deal with him accordingly," he added.

When asked what sort of punishment Ahmad would likely face, Abdullah said it would be "a stern one."

pak lah and bn leaders meeting on ahmad ismail racial slur umno bukit bendera penang 090908 04 "I cannot say what is in line for Ahmad as we must first consult with the Umno supreme council before we are to decide what to do with him but it would be stern one," he said.

Ahmad, who has refused to apologise for describing the Chinese as squatters in the country while campaigning in the recent Permatang Pauh by-election, claims his speech was taken out of context by the Sin Chew vernacular newspaper, which reported the incident in its Aug 25 edition.

Abdullah expressed regret for what had happened, stressing the need to prevent such incidents from recurring in the future.

"If these things happen again, it will spread and will involve more people. This would lead to resentment among the people and we cannot let such things happen," stressed Abdullah.

He also said that Ahmad's views did not reflect the views of other Umno members, who were themselves concerned over the statement made by the Bukit Bendera Umno division chief.

The prime minister also said the coalition would soon implement a code of conduct to guide inter-party relationship among component parties. The code of conduct will also contain provisions stating what would constitute offences as listed in the Sedition Act.

Is BN disintegrating?

Abdullah was grilled by journalists during the 10-minute press conference.

090908 05 When asked if the resentment shown by component parties towards Ahmad was an indication the coalition was disintegrating, the prime minister said the Barisan was still a favourite amongst the majority of the people.

"We are like a football team and we are getting more aggressive," replied Abdullah.

He added that unity among member parties was another issue discussed during the coalition's meeting.

"There is firmness among the BN leaders to stay united to go through any obstacles together and to strive together towards implementing the party agenda," he said.

Among those present at the press conference was MIC president Samy Vellu, Peoples Progressive Party president M Kayveas and Gerakan acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

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