

'Najib failed to deliver hope for GE13'
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Despite the rising heat of a snap polls being called, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak failed to address the hopes and aspirations for the 13th general election in his policy speech at the Umno annual general assembly, says a religious leader.

"The signal in many speeches is that if Umno does not capture the hearts of the people, it is not impossible that there will be a change in the federal government," former Perlis mufti Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin said today.

"But I find the president's speech to be less effective in conveying the message before the election, be it in terms of language or content. I was expecting something stronger," Asri (left) said.

He pointed out that the next general election would be a battle for political parties to capture the hopes of the people, however that 'hope' today has gone beyond bread and butter issues.

"With the change in 'hope' for the new generation, is Umno still relevant for today's generation to continue hoping? This is the question that Umno has to answer today."

The 'hope' today, he said, encompassed human rights, including freedom of speech and to participate in politics, good governance and equal rights.

'Appreciation does not equal votes'

The people may appreciate Umno's close to 70 years of history and contributions, but may not necessarily support it.

"The people who vote for other parties may not necessarily despise Umno, but simply feel that their hopes lie in other parties," Asri said.

Najib, who is also Umno president, spoke at length in his speech today on the contributions of Umno in the past 65 years, but touched briefly on his civil liberty reforms.

However, Asri acknowledged that Najib had attempted to revive the "fading hope" within Umno.

"But in certain aspects of reviving that hope, sometimes there are those who try to destroy it. Within Umno, there are those who create hope and there are those that destroy hope."

Drawing parallels to countries being swept by the Arab Spring, Asri said the people were willing to go against those governments and risk destruction because they had lost hope, and that risk would at least rekindle the possibility of new hope.

"If a government buries the hopes of the people, then it will be buried," he said.

"If Umno can succeed (in meeting the people's hopes), then Umno will continue winning, or else, the opposite will happen."