

40 young ulama join Umno but Asri a no-show
Malaysiakini.com
June 25, 2010

A group of 40 young ulama joined Umno today, in the hope of promoting a deeper understanding of Islam among the party's 3.2 million members.

But a notable absence among the group was well-known former Perlis mufti Mohd Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin (below).

NONThe group presented their forms to Umno president Najib Razak before the start of the party's supreme council meeting at the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

Former Perlis menteri besar Shahidan Kassim, who chaired a press conference to introduce the ulama, said their entry into Umno showed that the party was a 'viable vehicle to uphold Islam and its values'.

"These young ulama want to show that Islam is a religion of peace, not violence. They aim to provide insight into Islam, so all can see its purity," he said.

"This is our small contribution towards building the nation's future and Umno is merely a vehicle for them," he said adding the all the new entrants held at least a masters degree in various Islamic disciplines.

Speculation in political circles had been rife in recent weeks that Asri would be among today's group of ulama who would hand over their membership forms to Umno.

As recently as yesterday, Umno organising secretary Ab Rauf Yusof had expressed confidence that Asri will move to join the party.

Possible crackdown

Referring to his discussions with Asri and with the other religious scholars who joined today, he was quoted by the party's official website Umno Online as saying:

"Insya Allah (God willing) this will be a reality. Umno accepts anyone including religious scholars to the party."

young ulama join umno 250610 02However, some have mulled that Asri's rumoured move to join Umno was to shield himself against a possible security crackdown on Jemaah Islamiah (JI) operations.

The alleged link between some ulama and the terrorist organisation was apparently revealed during a special police briefing recently for top government officials.

Among the notable new members among the young ulama who joined Umno were UKM lecturer Fadlan Mohd Othman and Fathul Bari Mat Jahaya, the son of a another former Perlis mufti.

Fadlan acknowledged that Umno was a political entity but pointed out that their objectives were purely driven by their desire to share their knowledge of Islam.

"Even if Umno is a political party, we are not going in for politics. We had a few discussions

(with Umno's top leadership) and found we can cooperate [...] we want to do good," he said.

Threatens RM200m lawsuit

On Asri's rumoured entry into Umno, Shahidan said those in favour of Umno could either be members or supporters.

"Asri will enter either group when the time comes," he said, adding that entry of young ulama into Umno was being done in stages and Asri's entry would be in the second stage.

However, Shahidan declined to confirm Asri's 'second stage entry' when asked to.

NONEShahidan also threatened to file a RM200 million lawsuit against Institut Latihan Islam Malaysia deputy director Zamihan Mat Zain (right), for allegedly naming him as one of the local Muslim personalities leaning towards Wahhabism.

"Can someone explain what is a Wahhabi? I don't know. Just because I do not perform tahlil (prayers) for the dead does not make me a Wahhabi.

"He (Zamihan) just wants to be popular. This budak (kid) and the police should discuss this openly with me, (PAS president Abdul) Hadi (Awang) and Asri," he said.

During the briefing for top government officers at a hotel in Sepang, Zamihan had allegedly claimed that terrorist organisation Jemaah Islamiah has links to Wahhabism, an ultra-conservative and hardline form of Islam.

This sparked a backlash with Deputy Higher Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah accusing Zamihan of 'having a problem' with Shahidan.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/135603>