

**Ulama join Umno - another 'great show'**  
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I refer to the Malaysiakini report 40 young ulama join Umno but Asri a no-show.

This is another 'Great Show' by Umno – pressing all the 'right' emotional-religious buttons to impress rural Malay voters.

It is quite easy to find people who can sprinkle their conversation or speeches with Arabic/ Islamic terms, quote some verses from the Qur'an or some Traditions of Prophet Muhammad. White robes and turbans are easily donned; beards take a little longer.

The term 'ulama' has gradually been devalued in Malaysia (and probably also many other Muslim countries), by attaching it to anyone whom the authorities deem expedient to push forward as a reputable icon to show their (the authorities') Islamic credentials.

As far as I know, an 'ulama' is a person who has extensive and deep Islamic knowledge, and also a good understanding of his or her own society and the world in general.

He or she will also have to be a person who stands up fearlessly for the principles of Islam. This being so, throughout history most true 'ulama' have fallen foul of the authorities, since they openly criticised what they saw as un-Islamic policies or actions.

Many have been jailed and even executed for this. Indeed, this is not unique to Islam, but has been a fate which befell honest and brave religious scholars from other faiths, too.

To achieve this status, one would, therefore, expect 'ulama' to be quite mature in age, possessed of very strong moral character – and certainly not joining a political party which condones corruption and abuse of power.

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