

Asri: No new ideas from Umno
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 — A nervous Umno has failed to bring a new ideas to voters ahead of a general election expected soon, says Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin.

The maverick scholar, who has a large following here, told The Malaysian Insider the senior partner in Barisan Nasional (BN) must understand the youth do not just need material wealth but also assurances of their rights and freedom.

Asri says Umno must understand why people hate the party instead of attacking the opposition endlessly. — File pic
“Umno must give a clear idea, one that is compelling according to the current era, place and generation.

“The current generation is different from those in the past. They will not be attracted by just cash and handouts,” the former Perlis mufti said after attending the start of Umno’s general assembly as the party’s guest yesterday.

Asri, who is now a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, cited other Muslim countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia who are “rich and have no money problems but what they need and want are rights and freedom.”

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has promised a raft of reforms over the past few months but the opposition and civil society have said his “political transformation programme” has fallen short.

Although a parliamentary select committee has been meeting to discuss electoral reforms, the Peaceful Assembly Bill passed this week is said to be “even more repressive” than previous regulations while the repeal of the Internal Security Act has been delayed to March.

Umno is holding what is likely to be its last general assembly before polls expected early next year with a focus on the need to be relevant.

Party president Najib has called on Umno to be “extraordinary” to gain a strong mandate in the coming elections while his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin invited members to a “jihad (holy war)” in what he termed “the mother of all elections.”

But Asri, a Universiti Sains Malaysia lecturer, said Umno appears to have contracted “an anxiousness” as “most voters support the opposition not because they like the opposition but because they hate Umno.”

“Why do they hate Umno? This is a phenomenon that Umno must understand instead of attacking the opposition endlessly.

“Umno is talking among themselves. I see Umno is now anxious and has no idea what will happen in the coming elections,” he said.

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