

**Racism is haram, says ex-mufti
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 — Islam is borderless and Muslims who incite racism are going against the creed's teachings, popular Islamic scholar Datuk Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin said today, on the heels of Utusan Malaysia's attempt to shape Election 2013 results as a Chinese-vs-Malay vote.

Without naming anybody, the former Perlis mufti warned that harping on racial issues was damaging to society and nationhood, especially in a multiethnic country like Malaysia.

"Haram for a Muslim to fire up racism that oppresses an innocent party only because of skin colour or ancestry," Mohd Asri (picture) said in a statement, adding that Islam is colour-blind.

Pointing to Islamic texts, the vocal scholar said the religion's most famous prophet, Muhammad, had strongly opposed fanatical racism, what he termed "asabiyyah", which judged a person based on the colour of his skin instead of the principles of truth and justice.

"Islam is a religion that transcends all racial and geographical borders. Islamic justice broadly crosses the differences in thinking and religion," he said.

He pointed out that nobody could determine his ancestry before birth and a person should be assessed purely on his actions and morals, saying that the burden of one race's wrongdoings should never be borne by his descendents.

The scholar, popularly known by his acronym Dr MAZA, cautioned further that if inflammatory statements were not reined in, racism would spread and, as an example, he pointed to the discrimination against African-Americans in the United States.

Mohd Asri reminded Muslims that their god had created people of different tribes and races so they could get to know each other, and to add variety instead of quarrel.

His message is seen as a bid to calm the outrage over the Umno-owned Malay daily's incendiary headline on May 7 questioning "Apa lagi Cina mahu? [What more do the Chinese want?]", where it was seen to blame the Chinese for betraying the Barisan Nasional's (BN) trust in the community for the ruling coalition's poorer performance in the recent general election.

BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had also attributed the "Chinese tsunami" as being responsible for his coalition's failure to recoup its two-thirds majority in Parliament and significant vote losses in the cities despite analysts calling it an urban-rural split.

BN had defeated the Pakatan Rakyat pact to win 133 seats in the 222-member Dewan Rakyat, ceding seven more federal seats to the opposition.

While BN managed to wrest back the padi-farming state of Kedah, it failed to claw back Penang and Selangor, the two richest and most developed states nationwide that are crucial to financing Putrajaya's ambitious economic transformation plan.

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