

**DAP must make common cause with Sarawak**  
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COMMENT Now, at the start to the conferment of the status of dhimmitude on non-Muslim citizens, in Peninsular Malaysia at least, it behooves the DAP, as the political party with the strongest claims to secularism, to take a step that will help to check the spiral that is impelling the country towards an Islamic state.

Dhimmitude is the relegation of non-Muslims to the status of subject peoples in an Islamic polity. Non-Muslims had to pay a tax, called the jizra, in Ottoman and earlier times to their Muslim overlords as confirmation and protection of their status of subjection.

Peninsular non-Muslims are not as yet required to pay the jizra.

But when a Muslim-dominant police force refuses to obey civil court orders because they deem these to be conflicting with their sense of Islamic rectitude, and when the country's attorney-general cannot get an Islamic body to return holy books the latter had seized from their non-Muslim owners, it is a moot point whether dhimmitude has not already arrived, even if jizra is not as yet required of non-Muslims.

In light of all this, the secularist DAP's response to the reality of an increasingly de facto Islamisation of governance on parts of the peninsula must be strong, even radical.

It has to make common cause with the like-minded in other parts of Malaysia who are opposed to this Islamisation and who view the trend as a betrayal of the constitutional foundations of the country, which in the reckoning of established jurisprudential thought, are secular.

Four factors commend the present Sarawak government as a natural ally of the DAP in the necessitous task of opposing this trend of de facto Islamisation of the peninsula.

These are that the new-fangled administration of Adenan Satem will continue to allow the use of the term 'Allah' by Christians in matters of worship and faith education; it will not allow hudud to be introduced in the state; it will bar Malay rights group Perkasa from disbursing its toxins in Sarawak; and it will not allow Umno to take root in the state.

Combined with the decision of the Adenan government to press Putrajaya for an increase from five to 20 percent in oil royalties to the state, an increase that a Pakatan Rakyat federal government has pledged to pay the state if empowered, the conditions are compelling for the DAP to make common cause with Sarawak BN in a BN-Plus state government.

Chief Minister Adenan (left) has already suggested that there is much common ground between his government and the opposition parties in the state, DAP and PKR.

Now that the Islamisation trend on the peninsula has reached a critical juncture, the Adenan overture should be accepted because a realignment of like-minded forces in Sarawak is imperative as a check on the Islamic adventurism that has become the preference of certain quarters on the peninsula.

No permanent interests

This is anomalous only if you are prepared to say the same for a situation where DAP's Pakatan ally, PAS, presses for hudud implementation in Kelantan even as there was no mention of it in the opposition coalition's manifesto for the 13th general election in May last year.

One is not saying that one anomaly deserves another, but in politics, a putative adversary can become a compelling ally in the effort to thwart a common foe in exigent circumstances.

No need to allude to the incipient collaboration between longtime adversaries, United States and Iran, in the present troubles in Iraq to make the point; one only has to reference the Gaullist truism that in politics, the only thing that's permanent are one's interests - all other considerations are transitory.

There is broad conjuncture between the desire of the DAP in seeing that Malaysia remains a secular polity and the main thrusts of an Adenan Satem-led government in Sarawak.

That conjuncture should bring the two parties together. Hammered out properly, its dynamics will act as a sobering undertow to the Islamic adventurism, threatening to spread like wildfire, on parts of the peninsula.

Don't depend on 'moderate' Muslim legislators in Pakatan to do their part in checking this adventurism; they are an effect corps whom their by-the-holy-book critics can beat back easily.

In sum, the DAP has got to go it alone.

When the stakes are the survival of a multi-racial, multi-religious Malaysia, there is a need to think anew and act anew.

Going it alone would not be another form of adventurism; it is simply a necessity.