

Umno clearly not in same league as PAS
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MCA chief Chua Soi Lek brought up a pertinent point on Islam, the politics, but neglected to mention Islam, the faith. He is mistaken to equate the two.

However, Chua must be credited for broaching in public a subject that none in the ruling BN has dared so far. Not that it will save his party from entering the dustbins of history - unless it opens its doors to all - despite its pretensions to being the most democratic party in Malaysia.

NONEChua (right) is wrong to tar PAS with the same brush as that used against Umno. These two political parties, faith-based and race-based respectively, are poles apart both in their politics and in questions of faith.

PAS has effectively neutralised Umno by declaring that Islam is against all forms of racism. This has enabled it to enter into an effective political partnership with the DAP despite the latter publicly declaring a stand against Malaysia as an Islamic state. PAS is also in partnership with the bumiputera-based multiracial PKR and the Sarawak National Party (Snap).

PAS has pragmatically kept the Islamic state issue on the backburner. It does not want to ignite the secession of Sabah and Sarawak from Malaysia over the issue.

For starters, this brings us to the subject of what Islam is all about. We need a citation for this purpose. The professional ethics module, compulsory for all degree programmes, used by the Open University of Malaysia serves this purpose admirably.

Chapter 3 of the module tells us that Islam is not a new religion. It is said to be a continuation of the divine revelations from the Prophet Abraham to Prophet Muhammad who announced that he was the last prophet.

Fundamentally it is held that Islam is not an evolving religion

However, Muslim scholars of all persuasions and tendencies are in broad agreement that if Islam is to be applicable to the times, it must evolve.

This is also in keeping with its holistic approach viz unity in God, unity in humankind and unity in religion and as a religion that is timeless. Islam, in its very essence, means "submission to the will of God" since man has a free will.

Politics, not faith

This is where politics comes into Islam under the guise of evolving with the times. There's also the thinking that politics is an integral part of the religion since there is no separation of church and state in Islam. The faith, if people still remember beyond the rituals, has taken a backseat.

There are all sorts of people these days preaching in the name of Islam, but who really advocate militancy and spread an ideology of hate.

At least, there's some method in this that is more politics than religious. But that's a different story.

NNONEearer home, we have the continuing polemics over the use of the term 'Allah' by Christians in Malay print and, the Bible being printed in that language. Umno is behind both issues; vide the Printing Presses and Publications Act, in an attempt to play to the gallery at home over an East Malaysian issue. They are yet to bring the roof down on the use of the term Allah in prayer, song and worship. This is a contradiction in terms.

As an afterthought, one Sikh gurdwara was vandalised. This was after the perpetrators realised that the Sikhs too used the term 'Allah' for God.

The Sikhs are not on trial in the High Court because their holy books, unlike that of the Christians in the other half of Malaysia, are not in Malay print.

It can be noted that PAS did not fall into Umno's trap. The Islamic party does not see any issue with Christians using the term 'Allah' in Malay print and their Bibles. Nik Aziz even went so far as to say that "Muslims must be proud that Allah is the God of the Christians too and that Christians want to call their God, Allah".

It is anyone's guess what Umno hoped to benefit from whipping up sentiments over both issues. They fail to realise that they are not going anywhere with them.

It's just a matter of coincidence that The Herald, a Petaling Jaya-based Catholic newspaper, took up the 'Allah' issue of the East Malaysians. The Malay Bible issue is being taken up by the Sidang Injil Borneo (Borneo Evangelical Mission).

Islamic state ruse

The Islamic state issue is another area where PAS has differed with Umno. When former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad declared to the world that Malaysia was an Islamic state - "because 60 percent of Malaysians are Muslim" - there wasn't even a peep from MCA, MIC and Gerakan.

Instead, it was PAS that challenged Umno to a debate on Mahathir's (right) declaration. The offer was of course declined by the ruling party. PAS has stated that Malaysia is no Islamic state notwithstanding the fact that the people in a slight majority are Muslim.

Between PAS and Umno, it's the latter that spells real danger to the non-Muslims in Malaysia.

This has also been amply demonstrated in Sabah over the last 40 years, where the non-Muslim indigenous majority has been systematically disenfranchised. The danger is that their status in the future will be no better than that of Peninsular Malaysia's Orang Asli, who continue to suffer under Umno's "Islamic" policies.

So, it's a little difficult to fathom Chua's thinking that PAS, unlike Umno, is a real danger to the very fabric of Malaysia as a multiracial, multilingual and multicultural nation. Chua said this with a straight face after ticking off Umno as well for playing to the gallery to "unite the Malays" behind its banner.

MCA and Umno, along with MIC, are like three drunken men holding on to each other as they walk along the road to nowhere. If they are not careful, all three will fall into the nearest ditch.

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