

Teo to apologise to sultan over surau visit
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Teo Nie Ching, the Serdang MP whose visit to a surau last Sunday drew verbal attacks, says she will be submitting an apology and an explanation to the Sultan of Selangor.

In a statement released this afternoon, the first-term MP also expressed regret that there were efforts to manipulate the issue to instigate unrest.

"I regret that this matter has caused unrest among Muslims in our country, and that the issue has been fired up by certain parties for political reasons," said Teo, 29.

NONE"I sincerely and genuinely reiterate that my visit to the Surau Al-Huda was not politically motivated, and had no motive to put into question the sanctity of suraus and mosques," said Teo (centre in photo).

Teo explained that she had visited the Kajang surau on Sunday Aug 22 as their MP, in order to hand them the state government's monetary contribution for repairs to the surau fence.

She had timed her visit in order to break fast with the surau's committee members and congregation.

"Since I was invited to say a few words, I in all sincerity gave a brief explanation of the state's education programmes that benefit the people of Selangor," she said, adding that she welcomed advice from all parties on better execution of her duties

Hasty action regretted

NONEMeanwhile, Selangor DAP chief Ean Yong Hian Wah (right) is appealing for calm and restraint.

He urged the Selangor Islamic Council (Mais) to conduct more thorough investigations before taking any sort of action against anyone.

"I also regret the council's decision to issue a warning to Teo and to also suspend the surau committee almost immediately, simply because she had given a speech in the surau a few days ago," he said in a statement this morning.

He reiterated that Teo had already explained to him that she was merely there to present a RM1,000 donation to the surau committee, and that she addressed the congregation only when requested.

"At that time, she had only explained the Selangor state government's higher education loan scheme to the Muslims in attendance. There was nothing political in her speech," said Ean Yong, who is also the state exco in charge of new villages and illegal factories.

NONEInsisting that Teo had meant no harm and that she was genuine in wanting to spread the Ramadan cheer, he said that any responsible lawmaker would want to help all communities regardless of race and religion.

"I also do not want to see this issue manipulated by irresponsible parties such as Utusan Malaysia, Umno and Perkasa as a political and racial issue to destroy the harmony of our society," he said.

'Nothing wrong' says PAS

The government-linked Malay daily Utusan Malaysia yesterday front-paged a report titled 'Malaysia continues to be insulted' showing Teo at the venue without a headscarf - commonly required when entering an Islamic place of worship - and commenting that she had worn a form-fitting kebaya pendek (traditional Malay dress).

NONEIt also alleged that Teo had given tazkirah (religious advice) at the surau.

But what has apparently upset Mais - that had claimed that the Selangor sultan is "extremely upset" - was that a politician, and a non-Muslim at that, had given a speech in the prayer hall.

In a statement yesterday, Mais urged all quarters, including political parties, to safeguard the sanctity of mosques and suraus, and uphold the sultan's wish for Muslim places of worship to remain apolitical.

However, Serdang PAS division has defended the first-term MP's actions, saying that Islam is a flexible religion and that Muslims or non-Muslims delivering a speech in mosques or suraus should not be made a problem, adding that the issue was being exploited to attack the opposition.

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