

Teo: Nik Aziz encourages me to visit more suraus
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Shrugging off attacks by Umno and Selangor religious authorities over her visit to a surau last week, Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching says she is emboldened to visit even more Muslim houses of worship after being encouraged to do so by PAS' Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

NONEAccording to a Harakahdaily report, Teo said her 20-minute meeting with the top spiritual leader of the Islamist party today bore fruit in the form of his assurance that there was nothing wrong with non-Muslims visiting and entering suraus and mosques.

"Tok Guru (Nik Aziz) clarified to me that from the viewpoint of Islam, it is not an issue for a non-Muslim to enter a surau or masjid.

"He said that in fact, during the time of Muhammad, non-Muslims entered the mosque (of Medina) to meet with the Prophet," she said about the meeting with Nik Aziz in Kuala Lumpur following the filing of the Kelantan government's suit against Petronas.

The first-term MP drew a firestorm of criticism from Umno politicians, pro-Umno blogs and Malay dailies over her visit to the Al Huda surau in Serdang on Aug 22.

Her critics claimed that she had committed a grave insult to Muslims for speaking in the prayer hall, which is considered off-limits to non-Muslims.

NONEThe Selangor Religious Council said it will issue Teo a written reprimand, while Teo said she plans to write to the Selangor Sultan to apologise and explain her action.

After speaking to Nik Aziz today, however, Teo said she was told it was Umno - not Islam - that was being overly-restrictive on the issue of non-Muslims entering mosques.

According to her, Nik Aziz said Umno had become so desperate and narrow-minded that the party had given the wrong understanding of Islam to non-Muslims.

"He also told me that in Malaysia, Umno uses Islam to scare non-Muslims and has made Islam an exclusive religion, whereas Islam is for all human beings," said Teo.

teo nie qing giving allocation to bangi surauTeo said she will continue visiting mosques and suraus when invited. The parliamentarian yesterday visited the Al-Muhajirin surau in Bukit Mahkota, where she also handed RM500 to People Volunteer Corps (Rela) personnel.

Unlike her visit last week, Teo wore a head scarf and a loose-fitting baju kurung to avoid a repeat of accusations that she was disrespecting Muslim norms in suraus and mosques.

"I will still carry out my duties as member of parliament when invited. Since the (Aug 22) was blown out of proportion, I have received support from the people," said Teo.

When contacted, Teo said further that Nik Aziz expressed hopes that mosques could become more approachable for both Muslims and non-Muslims in order to bridge the gap between the races.

Asked about whether Nik Aziz had mentioned the matter of proper dressing, Teo said Nik Aziz assured her "as long as the dress is proper... it is enough."

Asked whether the headscarf is compulsory for her to wear, Teo said: "Nik Aziz told me 'it's okay. But if you wear it, that would be better.'"

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