

Serdang MP finds ally in preacher from Penang
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Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching, who is embroiled in controversy for visiting a surau, has found an ally in Zakaria Ahmad of Penang.

The preacher from Tasek Gelugor was himself in the centre of a storm for reciting a prayer for the Penang chief minister instead of the Agong, during a recent Friday sermon.

He described himself and Teo as victims of Umno's nasty spin on these matters.

Zakaria, who had to give a statement to the police and Penang religious affairs department over his alleged action, said Umno continues to politicise religious issues - and that this will eventually give Islam a bad name.

NONE"Teo's issue is not about religion but has been made into a political issue by Umno," he told Malaysiakini.

"They have made Islam (seem to be) very restrictive when in fact it is not really like that at all."

Teo, who had addressed a gathering inside the Al Huda surau in Kajang, has received a warning letter by the Selangor Islamic Council, which has suspended the surau committee for inviting her for the breaking-of-fast event.

Umno and Malay rights group Perkasa have condemned Teo's actions, although PAS has claimed not to have a problem with it.

Teo has justified herself, saying that she had not given any takziah (religious advice) as claimed by Malay-language daily Utusan Malaysia on its front page.

NONEOn whether non-Muslims may visit or enter a surau or mosque, Zakaria said this should not pose any problem.

"They are welcome as long as they are dressed appropriately and, for the women, if they are not menstruating," he said.

"As for Teo, she did not go to the surau for a religious matter. She was there on invitation to make contributions to the surau, which should not be a problem at all."

'Culture shock'

Jelutong mosque committee representative Khairil Annuar Kamaruddin said Umno is suffering from "culture shock" as it is not familiar with non-Muslims visiting places of worship.

Khairil Annuar said Umno is not willing to accept changes as it does not understand the concept of charity or sincere contributions made to Muslims by people of other faiths.

"What they are interested in is whether they can get projects. As for the surau and mosque committees, all they want to know is whether they can get contracts for renovation," he said.

NONEKhairil Annuar also said Umno is afraid that the time may come when a non-Muslim like Lim Guan Eng (left) will be able to rule the state according to the tenets of Islam, which the BN has not succeeded in doing.

"For example, when the chief minister says and does all the right things, such as banning sports betting, Umno is afraid that he is able to rule the state better than them," he said.

"If he (Lim) can really do it, then it is like a slap on the face of Umno, as it has not been able to (achieve this)."

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