

Kok's ire says much about DAP's predicament
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COMMENT "I question where Hishammuddin (Hussein) received the knowledge and the moral authority to judge anyone to be dirty, least of all Teo Nie Ching, who entered the surau in sincerity and with an open heart, and only because the surau leaders invited her in," said DAP MP Teresa Kok, in a statement over the latest furor concerning her fellow MP's visit to a surau in her constituency of Serdang.

As an example of disingenuousness, this statement ought to be framed and put up as cautionary wisdom for a policy of 'No entry' for the DAP on matters Islamic.

eli wong back to work160409 teresa kok 01One can't be sure if Kok would have worded her lament differently had she known that Islam is fastidious about some bodily secretions, and that Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein's use of the word "dirty" to describe Teo's visit should be construed in an Islamic context, and not as a comment on Teo's personal hygiene or moral comportment.

The tenor of Kok's criticism of Hishammuddin suggests she took his stricture in the latter vein.

That's why a policy of respectful avoidance by the DAP on matters Islamic is imperative as a tactical strategy in support of the party's avowed stance of secularism.

It's not just lack of knowledge about such Islamic proprieties on the part of non-Muslims that ought to prompt the policy; it is the bewildered incomprehension that could result when they contemplate things Muslims take on faith which others may view - in this particular instance - as misogynistic.

Recognition of that chasm undergirds the secularist agenda: that our treasured values are often incompatible and incommensurable and therefore it is only wisdom for the state to be secular.

Respectful avoidance

A policy of respectful avoidance on matters Islamic enables the DAP to position itself shrewdly for the intellectual wrestle that's coming up with its Pakatan Rakyat partner, PAS, when the coalition takes power at the federal level.

Theazlan latter prospect daily seems the more likely but for PAS' occasional amnesia about what caused their good performance in the 2008 general election and the brittleness of PKR policy in its Sabah chapter. Absent the two hindrances, Pakatan are smoothing on towards Putrajaya.

Which makes it all the more necessary that the DAP hones its secularist stance to a high intellectual sheen. Presently, a policy of respectful avoidance would be sound preparation for the wrestle with PAS that's coming up over the horizon.

The DAP must not expect support from Muslims in fellow coalition partner PKR in the upcoming wrestle. To do so would be akin to faulting Hishammuddin for his use of the word "dirty" in relation to Teo's visit to the surau in Serdang.

Muslims are obliged to support syariah (which means the divine path) law; therefore Muslim legislators in PKR would be placed on the horns of a painful dilemma, when and if a thrusting PAS obliges them, to choose between support for hudud and its rejection.

Why allow BN misrule to continue?

Some hold that that dilemma would never arise. Others find this view too optimistic. It's better for the DAP to be safe than to be surprised.

The DAP should position itself presciently for the possibility that non-Muslims in PKR would be impelled towards leaving the party if PKR Muslims feel they cannot stay the PAS push for hudud.

A convoluted scenario? Why not just allow BN misrule to continue?

Only the naïve expect political choice to be the selection of the better over the good; not infrequently, such choice entails preference for the undesirable over the intolerable.

There's no point in apportioning these adjectives to the range of choices - of parties and policies - we are faced with. But the mental exercise is necessary if only as girding for the road ahead.

The DAP, long used to the strenuous grind of opposition politics, must position wisely for the outcome of some hard-bitten choices coming up over the horizon.

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