

The high temperatures only now
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Certain Chinese personalities have been at the receiving end of high-profile savaging for their alleged encroachment into Muslim territory. The incidents involving Lim Guan Eng, Teo Nie Ching and William Leong received wide publicity because they are public figures.

For some of us though, our acquaintance with instances of Malay-Muslim intolerance occurred decades ago. But because we're not chief ministers nor members of Parliament, we suffered in silence.

While you can say that Umno targetting the opposition leaders for 'sullyng Islam' (as claimed) is politically motivated, how do you explain that the Selangor religious authorities JAIS and MAIS have sounded their displeasure and prohibition of non-Muslims in mosques? Certain Muslim high officials also decreed that the imam and khatib cannot publicly pray for Lim or any other non-Muslim in their doa.

Without the recent turn of events given so much press coverage, some non-Malays would otherwise be clueless still as to what's really going on in the rest of the country - meaning outside the comfort zone of Bangsar Malaysia where everyone is able to speak English and holds a professional job.

NONETHat a whole bunch of Muslims are getting all worked up is hardly a jolt to me at all. It is only those Malaysians with little exposure to the Malay climate who are even surprised that Hishammuddin Hussein and his ilk could savage Teo's mere presence in a surau.

The mindset that prompts an in-group/out-group divisiveness has always been there, just that the liberals cocooned in their affluent suburbs have preferred to be multicultural poseurs - it's more fashionable.

Malay-predominant environment

In my last article, I wrote about "a journalist exactly like that back in the New Straits Times when I was there", i.e. whose behaviour was recently replicated by the principal of SMK Bukit Selambau.

The incident with my ex-colleague - who threw a tantrum at non-Muslims eating in a common area during fasting month - happened in the mid-1990s. She was a journalist, not a politician. So her belligerence did not stem from politicking.

I was five years with the NSTP media group which has in its stable the Malay papers Berita Harian and Harian Metro besides the flagship NST. A government-linked company, NSTP's staff ratio - by race - is akin to the civil service. Its corporate headquarters Balai Berita has en suite amenities including 'bilik sembahyang'.

Another ex-colleague once went ballistic when she encountered me in the women's prayer room (this too was in the mid-1990s), just like how some Malays are today reacting to Teo and Leong over their foray into the surau.

Since I've 'been there and done that', do excuse me if I find some of Malaysiakini's non-Malay readers to be so utterly tiresome in their hostile comments against me. I might change my opinion of them if they could instead post in faultless BM rather than in English,

and by doing so demonstrate a language competency that might indicate at least some familiarity with the Malay milieu.

These 1Malaysian1st non-Malays are the very people without the requisite frame of reference to fathom the shape of the current controversy swirling around Teo ... well, until the reality of it hits them smack in the face.

Reading the Malay ground

Last October, I wrote an article 'Bagan Pinang: Masa depan tetap milik PAS'. It was my dispassionate evaluation that the country's future belongs to the Islamist party.

a kugan detention death funeral ummc to puchong 280109 kuala selangor mp dr dzulkefly ahmadPAS has been unwavering in its pursuit of an Islamic state - a legitimate aspiration for them just as it is a legitimate agenda for Karpal Singh to be defending secularism. The desire for an Islamic state is a genuine yearning felt not just by the PAS leadership but by many ordinary Malays. For them, that it should come to pass is an outcome entirely positive and wholly good.

MP for Kuala Selangor Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (left), who is a formidable intellectual, gave a compelling reply on why the PAS raison d'etre should be respected as their honest-to-God struggle. It was at the bloggers forum in May where he was one of the panellists and I was the session moderator.

The event co-chairman YL Chong, speaking from the floor, suggested that PAS should drop 'Islam' from its party name. Dzul's excellent riposte was, memorably, "Take Islam away from us and we will become like Umno".

While Dzul has been most diplomatic about Pakatan's common ideology platform, Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad was recently reported as being confident that PAS's allies would not stand in the way of hudud if this was to be the will of the people.

azlanKhalid is among the most accommodating, open-minded and progressive of the PAS national leaders but even he said it is ultimately the majority who will decide whether hudud is to be implemented. So the next consideration is how religiously inclined are the population in their numbers and feelings about the viability of hudud.

In view of this question, I'd like to recall particular attention to my article 'Criminal bullying of the poor into Islam'. If you'll look at its paragraphs under the crosshead 'This is Malaysia today', I had summarised the findings of a Merdeka Center poll conducted between January and April 2010 on the religious values held by the Malaysians sampled.

Which type is majority?

What is the level of religiosity among Malaysians? The Merdeka Center had sought to assess attitudes on sexual mores, the importance of religion to the survey respondents, hudud, and other behavioural norms and beliefs. It found that significant clusters of Malaysians were indeed religiously conservative to a great degree. For details, refer my Aug 5 article cited above.

NONENext, given the current developments, I would challenge my detractors to reread 'Guan Eng must heed Muslim authority on 'Allah''. Pay close attention to the facts collated because three-quarters of my research was from Malay sources, which I translated. For

example, I'm willing to bet that 99% percent of you have not come across before the Jakim sermon on the 'kafir dzimmi' status of non-Malays in the country.

How aware are you about the layers and layers of Islamic bureaucracy saturating our state apparatus, and their breadth and depth? It is their edicts that Teo is presently entangled in and having to apologise for transgressing. Religious bureaucrats wield a lot of power and influence because the adoption of syariah has enabled their positions and jurisdiction.

And to forestall scurrilous accusations (like those which greeted my Lim Guan Eng article previously), I would request that readers also take a detour to the Comments section of my Jan 11 article, 'Santa is scarier than firebombs'. Read what a reader Kamarudin Abu Bakar had to say, and my reply to him. Since the timeline is of some consequence to my stand on certain issues, do note that the exchange occurred seven months ago.

Back to the present. I've done a series of sporadic clinical reviews on our relentless Islamisation process (see column listing, top right). Work your way through them while bearing in mind all that's taking place now. With the benefit of hindsight after the Teo, Lim and school principals episodes, you will realise that "I told you so" much, much earlier.

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