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Hey, it's just a silly ha-ha movie

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DO we Malaysians have a sense of humour? Can we laugh at ourselves as hard as we laugh at others? Some folks from Hollywood, of all places, is about to help us find out.

Actor Ben Stiller (the luckless hero of *Something About Mary*) has written, directed and starred in a movie called *Zoolander*, which should be hitting the big screens in the US before the end of the year.

Whether the film is going to make it to local cinemas depends on how sporting we are. The central plotline of this comedy you see, is about a male supermodel who's brainwashed to assassinate the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Yes, you read that right: the Prime Minister of Malaysia. According to movie websites, the storyline goes something like this: the Prime Minister is raising the minimum wage and since we're apparently the single, biggest sweatshop for the international fashion industry, the wage hike means even higher prices for already overpriced fashion goods.

To pre-empt the problem, a shady cabal of fashion designers hatch a dastardly plot to kill the PM, and for their assassin, they brainwash Derek Zoolander, a shallow pretty boy who's just been dethroned as the number one male model in the world.

So far, so silly. *Zoolander* reeks of sight gags, wacky characters and jokes embedded in every line of dialogue and is, in other words, not the kind of movie that's to be taken even remotely seriously.

But we Malaysians are awfully thin-skinned about our place in the world these days.

I can just see some of us puffing up our chests in protest and declaring *Zoolander* to be the product of a vast, Western conspiracy against our defiant country.

Sure, joking about assassinating somebody is tacky. Then again the brain that dreamed up this flick, Stiller, is the same guy who deigned to act out a scene in *There's Something About Mary* that involved getting his gonads trapped in his zipper. Not exactly Oscar-winning material.

But we screened that movie here, as we have other films which trotted out their own brand of crass, lowbrow humour. The only reason why we would treat *Zoolander* any differently would be because of its rather rude treatment of our PM.

Who knows why Stiller chose Malaysia. Maybe he had the TV tuned to CNN while he was working on his screenplay, and that *Sights and Sounds of Malaysia* clip came on just as he was trying to think of some exotic locale.

It's highly unlikely however, that his choice was motivated by some deep, personal anger over Dr Mahathir's frequent lambasting of the West.

Our usual response to anything that makes us uncomfortable is censorship, but let's go wild for once and not do that here.

Let's show everybody what sports we are and recognise this movie for what it is: a silly film that's to be laughed at, not fretted over. Happy viewing, folks.