

**RPK's declaration: Damage done  
Malaysiakini.com  
Jun 27, 2008  
Ong Kian Ming and Oon Yeoh**

There is perhaps no online writer that has the ability and the reputation for political sensationalism than Raja Petra Kamaruddin, or RPK as he is popularly known. His latest move is his biggest and most controversial yet.  
MCPX

He has made a statutory declaration alleging that Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak's wife, Rosmah, was at the scene of the murder of the Mongolian translator Altantuya Shaariibuu.

raja petra court case 060508 stumpedFurthermore, in the same statutory declaration, RPK alleges that an intelligence report about the murder was given to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and that his son-in-law has it for safe keeping. One of the sultans is also said to be familiar with the matter.

That the public sees a putative link between Najib and Altantuya is not surprising given the former's closeness to Abdul Razak Baginda, who is charged with abetting the murder.

altantuya razak baginda mongolian murder case 030907Razak is a defence expert who helps to facilitate defence contracts that run into billions of dollars. The amount of commissions from such deals is a subject of intense speculation and Opposition Leader Dr Wan Azizah has raised this issue in Parliament. Najib has denied any impropriety in the defence deals, saying that they followed standard procedure. Still, the taint is on.

What is perhaps quite surprising is that given the closeness of the two men – Najib and Razak – no pictures of Najib with Altantuya has emerged (not withstanding Tian Chua's cut-and-paste satirical photo).

If there were indeed a photo – as has been widely speculated – one would have surely emerged on the Internet by now, which makes one think that perhaps there actually isn't any photo in the first place.

This is probably the only thing that is holding Najib's reputation intact. He has stated unequivocally that he does not know Altantuya and so far, no one has provided any evidence that he does indeed know her. That doesn't stop RPK though.

### **Living on the edge**

RPK has always lived on the edge. This is not the first – and we are sure it won't be the last – time that he has flirted with the long arms of the law with his provocative web postings.

It is often hard to distinguish fact from fiction in his speculative and sensationalist stories, such as the famous one claiming that the king had put the Royal Malay Regiment with 14 armoured vehicles on standby during the Bersih demonstration, "ready to roll at a minute's notice".

"The Royal Malay Regiment is not one to mess around with. The Agong is their commander-in-chief and soldiers are trained to obey their commander-in-chief at no

consequence to their own lives," RPK wrote, adding that this was "the Agong's way of saying that if you shoot the marchers, just like you did in Batu Burok in front of the Agong's palace in Kuala Terengganu, then all hell will break loose."

This is the stuff of Hollywood movies, not CNN or BBC. Our generous assessment is that about half of what RPK says in his always-entertaining articles has elements of fact and the other half, elements of fiction.

najib and rosmah 250608 02He's always provocative, always pushing the envelope. But his statutory declaration is without doubt the highest stakes poker game he has ever gotten himself into. By making a declaration that directly implicates Najib's wife, Rosmah, he is forcing the hand of the government. The administrative has no choice but to investigate his allegations.

RPK may be a fabulist but he is not stupid. We wonder if this is part of his strategy to get himself prosecuted so that he can have his day in court and use that opportunity to reveal proof and documentation that irrefutably backs up his story. If he has any, that is.

### **Names dragged through the mud**

But even before that happens, much of the damage has already been done by taint of allegation alone. If RPK's objective was character assassination, he's succeeded. Regardless of whether any evidence ever sees the light of day, Najib's and Rosmah's names have already been dragged through the dirt.

The fact that Najib has shown an incredible reluctance to challenge his boss Abdullah only adds further fuel to the speculation that Abdullah has something on Najib that keeps him in line.

So, who benefits from all this? It definitely boosts RPK's popularity and acclaim as a fearless political commentator and activist. In some ways, even Abdullah gains because this effectively negates any chance of Najib launching a leadership challenge.

Although PKR has distanced itself from the declaration, the ultimate beneficiaries are party de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim and Pakatan Rakyat. The allegations could provide the kind of stimulus to further drag Barisan Nasional down, paving the way for Pakatan to eventually take over the government in due course.

Perhaps that is what RPK is counting on – that his high stakes poker strategy will ultimately bring down the BN government and usher in a Pakatan government that will decline to prosecute him.

Whatever adjectives one hurls at RPK – reckless, heroic, foolhardy, brave – we all can agree on one thing. The man's got guts.

ONG KIAN MING is a PhD candidate in political science at Duke University and OON YEOH is a writer and new media analyst. You can listen to both of them discuss this topic in their Realpolitik podcast.