

A model nation?
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According to a *Bernama* report carried by *Malaysiakini*, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said of his recent meeting with US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and other officials that "they (the US) want to have productive relations with Malaysia. They regard Malaysia as a model nation."

The appearance of the word "model" here raises some most perplexing questions. The first and most obvious of these, of course, is whether Najib was quoted accurately.

But let's assume he was, as *Bernama*, while by no means the proper news agency it purports to be, is the mouthpiece of the BN government, and therefore unlikely to mis-report a message from one of its masters.

The next question that arises is whether Steinberg or some other member of his delegation actually used the word "model", or whether it was Najib who chose the term to summarise, paraphrase or more likely totally misrepresent the Americans' actual comments.

My personal guess is that "model" was entirely Najib's idea. And a very bad idea at that, considering how many meanings the word is capable of conveying besides the positive one he presumably intended.

For example, while Najib obviously used it to portray Malaysia as what my *Webster's Dictionary* calls "an example for imitation or emulation", "model" can also be understood to mean "a miniature representation of something".

So if the Americans actually used the word "model" about Malaysia, it may well have been intended in the derogatory sense, as in a miniature representation of a real democracy, complete with a miniature representation of a system of justice and a miniature facsimile of a police force, and so on.

After all, the US State Department not so long ago put Malaysia on the worst-of-the-worst list for people-trafficking and abuse of the human rights of refugees, and the BN government has shown itself incapable of anything beyond a miniature representation of reform in this or any other area.

But whoever actually uttered the word "model"; whether it was a mischievous attempt at ambiguity by the Americans, or a Freudian slip of the lip by Najib, the meaning that came through loudest and clearest for me and many others was "model" as in "Altantuya Shaariibuu" and "Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno".

Malaysia's image as a model nation is again under attack, with the case of "part-time model" Kartika back on the world news. *AAP* is reporting that, following the suspension of her punishment for the duration of Ramadan, the appeals panel of the Shariah High Court in Kuantan has upheld her sentence of six strokes of the cane and a RM5,000 fine for drinking beer in a hotel nightclub.

Abdul Hamid Abdul Rahman, chief religious judge of Pahang state, is quoted as saying that

he "found that the High Court judge had acted accordingly within his jurisdiction".

AAP makes the point that human rights group Amnesty International has urged Malaysia to abolish whipping as a 'cruel and degrading punishment' that damages the nation's international image.

For her part, in a bold attempt to shame and embarrass her persecutors, Kartika (*right*) has refused to appeal against her punishment and demanded that she be caned publicly.

But religious authorities claim that she will be caned in private, fully clothed, and with a lighter rattan than customarily used in criminal cases.

As woeful a model of Malaysia that the whipping of Kartika conveys, however, it's nothing compared with the other case that haunts the nation in general and Najib in particular, the murder and post-mortem mutilation with C4 explosive of the Mongolian "model", Altantuya Shaariibuu.

If ever there was a model of political meddling in a political crime, this has to be it. From the prosecution's declaration that those selected for trial were definitely the only suspects, through the unexplained expunging of the deceased's name from immigration records, the failure to call many alleged witnesses and others of interest to testify, and the subsequent 'disappearance' of private investigator Bala and his family, the whole affair stinks to high heaven.

And even if Najib ever gets smart enough to stop using the word "model" in his press conferences, the stench is not about to go away.

Certainly not if Raja Petra Kamarudin (*below*) has any say in the matter. As he consistently has, from wherever he's living in hiding from arrest on criminal defamation charges arising from his outspoken, not to say outrageous, allegations about Najib and his 'model' Malaysia.

In fact just minutes ago I read his latest No Holds Barred column on *Malaysia Today* revealing new, apparently documented information on the Altantuya scandal. Actually I didn't read it on the *Malaysia Today* site, but on magickriver.blogspot.com, where Antares has posted it under the following message:

"One more reason why *Malaysia Today* is under severe attack! Since *Malaysia Today* published leaked cabinet memos on Sept 17 revealing that the finance ministry had sought the BN government's approval and endorsement of the RM12.5 billion Port Klang Free Zone scam, the popular news portal founded by RPK has been under massive attack by paid hackers.

On Sunday, Sept 27, RPK released yet another explosive document that only served to provoke intensified attacks against *MT*. I managed to save the text and one image from *MT* before the site became inaccessible.

The least I can do in the fact of such dirty tactics is to reproduce RPK's post for those who have yet to read it..."

Having read these latest allegations concerning the Altantuya case, I have no idea whether or not they're accurate. But one thing I know for sure.

As long as Malaysia continues to muddle along under a government as crooked and inept as that of Barisan Nasional, RPK and others like him, with their unquenchable passion for truth and justice, are the kind of role models that the nation sorely needs.

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