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What a patriotic family

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Mixed parents name daughters Malaysia and Mardeka

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PETALING JAYA: When Victoria Margarita was pregnant with her second child, she chanced upon a beautiful poster and was inspired to name her daughter after it.

Margarita, 45, a Venezuelan, was enchanted by a *Fascinating Malaysia* poster featuring the Blue Mosque (Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque) in Shah Alam.

"She liked the picture and decided that Malaysia would be the name of our child," said her husband Tun Kamalul Zaman, 45, an IT consultant from Ipoh, Perak.

So the child was named Malaysia Venecia; her middle name means Venezuela.

Malaysia, 10, has a tough time convincing people of her name.

"People don't believe me and they



Malaysiaku Gemilang

usually ask my parents my name," she said.

Malaysia's elder sister Maria Cristina, 17, who was named after her grandmother, is the only one among four siblings with a common name.

Her younger sisters are Mayday Esmeralda, eight, and Mardeka Victoria, six.

Mayday was named after *May-Day*, a book about the Cold War.

Mardeka got her name when her mother came to Malaysia for a vacation and saw a clip of Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman proclaiming Independence at the National Museum.

"She asked me the meaning of *Merdeka* and I told her it meant freedom. She was pregnant at the time and was thinking about naming the baby *Libertad*, which means freedom in Spanish," said Kamalul, who met and married Victoria when he was working in Venezuela.

He subsequently brought his family over to Malaysia in 2001.

Merdeka seemed to fit pretty well with the family tradition of naming the children with names beginning with the letters "Ma".

The girls are sometimes teased about their names.

Malaysia's friends sing *Cuti Cuti Malaysia* or shout *Malaysia Boleh*

while Mardeka's friends would call out her name and raise their hands, mimicking Tunku's proclamation gesture.

The teasing however does not bother the girls much.

"I'm very proud of my name," said Malaysia.

"I remember when Mardeka was one year old and there was a programme about Independence on the radio with Tunku making the proclamations '*Merdeka!*'. She was looking around trying to figure out who was calling her," said Victoria.

And this patriotic family, who are also ardent fans of the Perak football team, religiously attend the National Day parade whenever it is held in the Klang Valley.

"We are up by midnight to get ready and try to get a good spot by 3am," said Kamalul, adding that this year would be no different.