

Spread the truth, counter the lies

GOOD INTENTIONS: Many want to do the right thing, but their actions are misplaced

A FEW days ago, the Mumbai Municipal Council came up with a new regulation that perplexed a large number of people, and may have angered some.

The council decided to ban stores from putting scantily-clad mannequins outside their shops in a move to prevent rape. The city councillor who proposed the ban said the mannequins were degrading to women and might provoke men to attack them.

"Such people get provoked by mannequins. After all, a mannequin is a replica of a woman's body. That's why I oppose it, because mannequins do not suit Indian culture," Ritu Tawde was quoted as saying in an Associated Press (AP) report.

The move was roundly criticised, especially by netizens. Understandably so, perhaps.

With the spate of rapes — terribly violent ones at that — that has hit India of late, it is no small wonder that politicians have been scrambling to enact anti-rape regulations. But one thing many people fail to understand, something that anyone who works with victims can tell you, is that rape has more

to do with power over someone than lust or sexual feelings.

The same AP report also quoted the president of the Federation of Retail Traders' Welfare Association, Viren Shah, as saying: "We are living in the 21st century where these kinds of things, all porn, the movies, the pictures, all these things are available on websites, available on mobiles. (A) mannequin hardly makes any difference to the people."

So, no scantily-clad mannequin is going to provoke someone to attack women. Tawde has her heart in the right place, but she is not going about it the right way.

At home, we are not short of people with their hearts in the right place, but are misplaced in the actions they take.

Two non-governmental organisations, in their bid to safeguard harmony in the country, have proposed that the country block social networking websites such as Facebook.

Gagasan Anti-Penyelewengan Selangor (GAPS) and Majlis Belia Selangor believe measures such as this, adopted in Iran and China, would stop the spread of false information that jeopardises the nation's unity, creating divisions

among the races.

GAPS chairman Hamidzun Khairuddin was quoted in a Bahasa Malaysia daily as saying such measures were necessary as there were quarters that spread lies and racial and religious insults, while MBS chairman Badrul Hisham Badrudin was reported as supporting Hamidzun's proposal.

Falsehoods on the Internet? Surely you jest, good sirs!

Are you saying that picture of the man with a rhino's head is a fake? That the picture of the unicorn is but a horse with a horn glued on its head?

Yes, the Internet is not the most reliable of sources. Yes, even Wikipedia, that oh-so-used-and-abused site that many, especially students, apparently, consider the Gospel truth.

But, let's face it gentlemen, blocking Facebook is not the right answer. All that would do is create a large number of "fans" for you; walking zombies deprived of their social networking fix, with evil in their hearts and murder on their minds.

Facebook, after all, is something that is only bad when it is abused. Just like any other site on the Internet. It has brought long lost

friends and relatives back in touch, even if they are worlds away. Unless you're an addict, it isn't harmful.

And let's not forget those lies which are being spread, or were spread, on Facebook were also spread through blogs and other Internet websites. Facebook was just a means to spread it further and wider than the average blog can reach.

So, how does one counter the falsehoods being spread on the Internet, short of blocking the World Wide Web all together?

The answer is simple: spread the truth, or at least, counter the lies. Once you have done that, then you sit back and let the truth prevail.

Of course, that means you have to trust the rakyat to be smart enough to differ between the truth and the lies. But that is all you can do.

If blocking Facebook is the answer, then we will have to ban other things as well, just to be consistent. Sugar, nasi lemak, doughnuts, chocolate and ice cream are just a few things that come to mind. After all, if not taken in moderation, these things are bad for you.

lesliea@nst.com.my

But, let's face it gentlemen, blocking Facebook is not the right answer. All that would do is create a large number of "fans" for you; walking zombies deprived of their social networking fix, with evil in their hearts and murder on their minds.

Leslie Andres
is NST
news editor



In travels, familiarity breeds excitement

REVISITS: In the midst of our search for new experiences, at times we need to return to the familiar

WHAT is it about certain places that make you visit again and again? There are few countries or cities that have this quality — the ability to draw you in on your first encounter and the power to compel you to think, "I need to come again" way before you board your flight home.

I know an English lady who, for the past 20 years, has been spending three months every year in Turkey. "I can't help it, I need my Turkey fix", she told my parents and I when we met her two weeks ago.

As far as I can remember, my aunt has been going to Phuket every year with her family for the past decade or so. At last count, I've been to New Zealand, China and

Bali three times each and Turkey and Russia twice.

I've done other repeat visits, but these are the few that stand out for me. I keep going back to China because it's too large to cover in one go and because I find its culture and people fascinating. This is in spite of the toilet habits of the Chinese, their (occasional) gruff attitude and their constant jostling and pushing.

Over time, I've learnt to accept these quirks and store them neatly under "that's-just-what-they're-like". But why do we revisit some of the places we've been to? To relive our memories because they make us happy, perhaps, but why is that so? Sometimes, we have specific reasons for wanting to go back to certain places. At times, it is to clear up unfinished business.

When I had the chance to visit Krabi, Thailand, for a second time, I scoured the shops fronting the beach in Ao Nang, hoping to bump into a young man I had met on my first trip. He had told me how his grandparents had come on an arduous land route from Nepal and settled down in Thailand, where he was born. This man, who worked in a souvenir shop, knew how to speak

One of the best things about revisiting a place is finding out how things haven't changed and discovering that you still remember your way around.

Anis Ibrahim
travel and writes
as The Five Foot
Traveller at www.fivefeetflat.net



Nepali, but had never been to Nepal.

What was ironic was that the notebook I had used on my first visit was from Kathmandu. When I went to Krabi again, I decided that

I would ask this young man more questions and perhaps get a story out of him. I searched and walked the entire stretch of shops on both the days I was in Ao Nang, but never found him.

Unfortunately, I couldn't remember his shop because they all looked the same. One of the best things about revisiting a place is finding out how things haven't changed and discovering that you still remember your way around. If a place had special meaning for you the first time, you're likely to recall where exactly that nice restaurant or park is on a subsequent visit.

In Bali, there is a souvenir shop called Juntok, a couple of doors away from Murni's Warung on Jalan Raya Campuan in Ubud. I remember the shop to this day purely because of its owner, a large, giggly woman in her 30s, whom I had encountered on my first visit to the island. Her souvenirs were no different from the millions scattered across Bali but, for me, she stood out because she giggled and flirted with my male friends, including the ones who had come with their wives. I thought she was hilarious.

Eight years later on my third visit, I went out to look for the shop and was overjoyed to find it in exactly the same spot. The owner hadn't changed in the slightest bit. She was still plump and full of mirth and said she remembered me, although I think it was just PR.

When we leave home to explore the world, we all want to experience new things and new places, yet we are taken in by the familiar. We are fascinated by the unusual, but we are also drawn to things that we recognise.

I sought out the Balinese woman on my later visit because I had met her, because I felt that it would be nice to set eyes on someone I knew from before. It didn't matter if she couldn't remember me. What did was that it was comforting to know that some things never change.

In the midst of our search for new experiences, at times, we need to return to the familiar. So, if you go to Bali after this, look out for a shop called Juntok near the bridge in Campuan, Ubud. If you meet a large woman there in a batik sarong who flirts with your husband or boyfriend, don't worry, that's just what she's like. And please tell her I said hello.

Fighting crime a two-way street

COOPERATION: In order to successfully bring down crime in the country, all sides need to work together

SO, the Royal Malaysian Police have been saying that the nation's crime index has declined. That, invariably, drew a whole host of criticism from Malaysians, who are convinced that crime in the country has increased, not decreased.

When Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaludin's house was targeted by robbers, there were many who posted on Facebook and Twitter, predicting that police would act on the report lodged by the Umno man.

They also said in Khairy's case, police could not say that crime was on the decline.

When photofits of the suspects were released, they again criticised the police, saying the only reason the force was being super efficient was because the victim was a VIP.

But one thing that people fail to realise is that crime statistics are just that: statistics.

What this means is that the crime index is merely the number of crimes that are known.

If a crime occurs and the victim lodges a police report, then the crime is counted in the index. It is as simple as that. If it goes un-



Police showing photofits of the suspects in Khairy Jamaludin's house break-in recently.

reported, then it does not get counted in the index.

If crimes do not get reported, then the crime index remains low. If less and less crimes are reported, then the crime index will show that crime is on the "decline".

So, just how many crimes out there do not get reported? Nobody can tell you.

Could the number of crimes being committed in Malaysia actually be twice, thrice or even quadruple what the crime index says? Who can say?

There are many reasons why people do not report crimes.

One reason is that they cannot be bothered: it is a waste of time having to go to the police station and filling out the report. No telling how long it could take.

Another is that what was stolen or snatched was not valuable enough.

It could have just been a bag of dirty laundry being carried to the neighbourhood *dobi*, or a wallet filled with just a few ringgit.

Or, it could have been that the

All, including failed attempts, should and must be reported, if only to show the true state of the crime index in the country. Only then can the fight against crime be successful.

Leslie Andres
is NST
news editor



robbery/snatch theft was a failed attempt.

What is the use of reporting something that did not work for the robbers or snatch thieves, after all?

In the case of rape or abuse victims, a sense of shame can also play a part, with many deciding against reporting for fear that they will be ostracised by society because of what is obviously not their fault.

Then, there are those who ask: "What can the police do?"

These people either have little faith in the ability of our men and women in blue or cynically think that the cops are a lazy bunch, intent only on getting their money at the end of the month.

There are also those who believe that every member of the police

force or at least, the vast majority, are corrupt. These people, for whatever reason they do not report crimes, are wrong.

All, including failed attempts, should and must be reported, if only to show the true state of the crime index in the country. Only then can the fight against crime be successful.

But success, as they say, is a two-way street.

How many of us have encountered policemen who dissuade us from lodging reports? Not the kind of policeman who actually say we should not lodge the report. Not many of those stories around.

No, the ones who seem to inadvertently dissuade us.

This would be the policeman who tells us things like "there is probably little hope of catching the culprits or getting back what was stolen from you" or "the culprits are probably long gone by now".

To put it mildly, these kinds of statements do not inspire too much confidence in the force.

All it does is to make the victim think twice about lodging a report the next time a crime occurs.

In order to successfully bring down crime in the country, all sides need to work together. And the most important element in this equation has to be the *rakyat* themselves.

They need to be protected. Most definitely. In fact, it is incumbent upon the government and police force to protect them.

But the *rakyat* are also important, in that they need to do everything possible to protect themselves and other members of our society, and the least of these measures would be to report any and all crimes.

lesliea@nst.com.my

The domino effect of one good deed

KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS: Unexpected generosity makes one more attuned to being thankful

ON my overland trip from Russia last year, I began having money issues when I reached China.

I had not exactly run out of money; I had just, sort of, run out of cash. I had planned to withdraw money with my credit or ATM cards once I reached south China.

Unfortunately, when I reached Nanning, the entry point for Vietnam, I realised that I could not use any of my cards.

I was having a bit of bad luck — none of my personal identification numbers (PINs) worked, which meant that unless my luck turned, I would not be able to withdraw money for the rest of the trip.

I knew I could end my misery by using my credit card to buy a plane

ticket back to Malaysia, but I was stubborn and wanted to complete the whole journey on land, so I went ahead with my plans and entered Vietnam with about US\$200 (RM637).

That was not enough because I still had the whole of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand to go through before reaching home.

To this day, I do not know why I have never told anyone about my money problems.

I was worried, but I was hanging on to the hope that just maybe, I would finally find an ATM which would accept my cards.

Also, there was always the option of selling my hair for wigs in Vietnam or donating blood in Cambodia (I was serious about this), so

it never occurred to me to tell anyone, not even my brothers, should I be reluctant to take money from my parents.

I have tried to figure out why I never sought help, but I cannot put my finger on it. Maybe it was a combination of having faith that the issue would somehow be solved and wanting to deal with my own problems without asking for help.

In a bid to save money in Hanoi, I ate at modest restaurants and looked for a hotel which I could pay for using my credit card.

Soon after, a stroke of good luck magically appeared in the form of my older cousin Ainuddin, who happened to be in Vietnam around the same time.

In fact, he had been trying to contact me for days via Facebook, being aware that I was about to enter Vietnam, but as social media networks are banned in China, I only saw his messages after leaving the country.

It was after dinner on his last night in Ho Chi Minh City when,

after passing the local Maybank branch, I remarked offhandedly that oh yes, that is right, I have not been able to take out any money at all from them, how strange.

That was when Ainuddin, who would be leaving the following afternoon for Malaysia, stared at me and demanded why I had not mentioned it earlier.

I could not answer him.

Early the next morning, I met my cousin for breakfast, during which he surreptitiously handed me a thick envelope containing several hundred US dollars and a few million Vietnamese dong.

I assured him that it would be more than enough until I reached home, but even then, he asked me to contact him if I needed more.

Two nights before I was due to leave Bangkok to cross into Malaysia, I was walking past the Chidlom Skytrain station when I saw a beggar lying down by the stairs.

I had just packed my dinner and was on my way back to the hotel.

It is usually after you have been

To this day, I do not know why I have never told anyone about my money problems. I was worried, but I was hanging on to the hope that just maybe, I would finally find an ATM which would accept my cards.

Anis Ibrahim
travels and writes
as The Five Foot
Traveller at www.
fivefeetflat.net



hit by misfortune that you are grateful for the kindness and good luck that come your way.

So, I stopped, gave him my fried rice and went to look for something else to eat.

Merdeka is about nation's struggles

PATRIOTISM:

Malaysians should never forget those who sacrificed their lives in defence of our freedom

TOMORROW marks the anniversary of the signing of a very significant piece of paper in Malaysian history.

It took place thousands of kilometres away, yet it was as significant here as it was where it was signed. It was significant in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. It was significant in many parts of the world, especially in the Pacific.

Tomorrow marks the 68th anniversary of the surrender of Japan in World War 2, aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, anchored in Tokyo Bay surrounded by more than 200 Allied vessels.

And while the main players on both the side of the Allies and that of Japan were the focal points of the ceremony, there were many among those seated on the sidelines who were of equal importance, having been prisoners of war under the Japanese. Among these was one Lt-Gen Arthur Percival, the man who surrendered Singapore in February, three years earlier, after the Imperial Japanese Army had swept down the Malayan



The Sulu intrusion in Sabah was the latest instance where members of the security forces had to put their lives on the line. Bernama pic

Peninsular in double-quick time.

Whether he was the one to blame for the capitulation of Malaya or not, Percival was perhaps the most important "representative" of this country at a significant event, even though he most likely did not even begin to think so. At the hands of the Japanese, many Malayan heroes lost their lives, whether in combat or during 3½ years of brutal occupation. Then there were those who had suffered in the hands of the dreaded Kempetai.

And there were many such souls, the most obvious being Lt Adnan Saidi, killed on Feb 14, 1942, while defending Singapore.

And while we forgive our once "masters", we should never forget those who sacrificed their lives in defence of our freedom. Nor should we forget those who lived on despite their struggles for the same

goals, whether in times of war or times of peace.

Where would we be without those who fought on during the Japanese Occupation? Where would we be without those who resisted a war of terror conducted by Communist insurgents? Where would we be without those who defended our freedom during the Confrontation?

Most recently, this country suffered an armed intrusion. And while this was a localised affair which would never have grown to such a size that it would threaten the entire nation, the contribution of the country's security forces during this time is of no less import.

After all, Sabah and her Bornean sister Sarawak are as much a part of Malaysia as any state in the peninsula, and an attack on either is an attack on the entire country.

It is fitting that the government came up with the theme 'Malaysiaku berdaulat: Tanah tumpahnya darahku' for the 56th Merdeka celebration.

Leslie Andres is NST news editor



With the intrusion by Sulu gunmen and the loss of 10 security forces personnel so recent in our memories, it is fitting that the government came up with the theme "Malaysiaku berdaulat: Tanah tumpahnya darahku" for the 56th Merdeka celebration.

Merdeka, after all, is not just about achieving freedom; it's not just about the people who peacefully negotiated our independence from our former colonial masters. It's about the struggles of a nation and its people in keeping that freedom.

It's about the soldiers in our army and the sacrifices they make. It's about the sacrifices of other mem-

bers of our security forces, like the police, the Royal Malaysian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Air Force. It's about the sacrifices of Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency personnel.

It's about the sacrifices of the former members of the Home Guard. It's even about people like former police sergeant Arthur Albert Waters, a Briton who loved Malaysia so much he stayed on after serving in the police here, dying just days before Merdeka this year, at the age of 92.

It's about the sacrifices of civilians such as Gurchan Singh, the Lion of Malaya, who published communiques giving the true picture of the war during the Occupation at the risk of execution, or his many "agents" who helped him spread the news, some of whom were executed or tortured.

It's about people like Sybil Kathigasu, known as Malaya's Florence Nightingale, providing medical supplies during the Occupation, who also suffered torture, and those countless unnamed souls who helped prisoners of war on death marches.

From Merdeka Day to Malaysia Day this year, at the very least remember these heroes, both known and faceless, and remember that we live in a peaceful country because of them. Remember that they loved this country.

Perhaps then will we appreciate not only the sacrifices of those who have gone before us, but learn to appreciate and love, even more, this beautiful land we share.

leslie@nst.com.my

A good Malaysian represents the best of humanity

GLOBAL CITIZEN: He embraces everything the world has to offer

FOR starters, I don't think the phrase "good Malaysian" necessarily means a Malaysian who never has anything bad to say about his country.

Neither should it be used to describe someone who constantly sings praises about our leaders and puts them on a pedestal because let's face it, nobody's perfect.

It should, however, mean a person who is proud to be Malaysian and defends our nation if someone says something unfounded or inaccurate about it.

Someone who points out our shortcomings could still be a good Malaysian simply because he wants us and our nation to improve, unless of course, he is the kind of person who complains

about everything all the time.

I tend to think that at the most basic level, a good Malaysian is someone who represents the best of humanity, and when you find yourself in a foreign country or in the company of foreigners, this definition becomes important.

It is the ability to present Malaysia in a good light. Not only by telling everyone how wonderful our food is or how beautiful our beaches are, but also by representing the best of what a global citizen should be.

A good Malaysian, I think, is someone who is knowledgeable in the history and current affairs of his own country. It would be embarrassing if you were unable to answer a question about Malaysia and a foreigner who did a Google

A good Malaysian loves his country but isn't prejudiced or thinks he is better than everyone else.

Anis Ibrahim travels and writes as The Five Foot Traveller at www.fivefeetflat.net



reading material. He may have his preferences; he may be more partial to reading from the Internet, but he doesn't ignore mainstream media just because he hates newspapers or the people who run them. He reads everything, and then decides what is right and what is wrong.

Conversely, even if he believes everything he reads in mainstream media, he still sets aside time for online portals because he knows that is how one makes an informed decision.

This person is also a good conversationalist when he's in the company of people he just met. He contributes to discussions. He can only do this if he is intelligent enough to be aware of what is going on in the world and if he has an opinion on anything at all, whether it be on world politics or why the people in *MasterChef Australia* are much nicer than those in the original *MasterChef*, or whether Star Trek is better than Star Wars (which, by the way, is a great topic

and an ideal way to select a future life partner).

Should this person happen to find himself in a group discussing a subject he knows nothing about — unavoidable when one is travelling — he will end up knowing more after that conversation simply because he listened and asked questions. Why? Because he is interested in learning new things.

A good Malaysian loves his country but isn't prejudiced or thinks he is better than everyone else. He is open-minded, not judgemental or suspicious of people who are different from him. He acknowledges and appreciates the differences in everyone.

When exposed to foreign cultures, which may seem strange to him, he is still respectful, polite and politically correct.

A good Malaysian is someone, long after he goes home, people will remember and say: "Nice person. From Malaysia. Never been there, but it seems like a great place."

search on his smartphone told you the answer.

In his quest for knowledge, a good Malaysian is well-read and isn't selective when it comes to