Why Crazy move is more smart than senseless

Often people have said to me: "You must be crazy!" You, too, may have probably encountered such a reaction from relatives, friends, maybe even strangers. It could come in the form of a question: "Are you crazy or what?"

So what is being crazy? In alphabetical order, a thesaurus can offer this selection of meanings and nuances: bizarre, daft, eccentric, fanatical, idiotic, mad, outrageous, passionate, ridiculous, senseless, unwise, wild, zany.

Amusingly unusual, that is one meaning of zany. While mad covers the whole range, from highly desirable to the totally unwanted, that is, from passion as in mad about food or a loved one, to insanity in the literal meaning of very serious mental illness.

So how should we take it when a university's student publication in Singapore runs a cover story that says we are going crazy?

BLURT!, all capital letters with the signature exclamation mark, is published by students of Singapore Management University. It is a glossy, news-magazine style periodical. Its January-March 2006 edition has these main cover listings: "Going crazy. Naked cabaret in Singapore? We visit Crazy Horse Paris."

When the magazine assigned two students to watch the show and comment on it, it had to make sure they were 21 or older. Here are writers Sheryl Loh and Matthew Chua's take on their experiential outing, as summarised in a top-of-the-page caption: "Crazy Horse Paris is more than just an art revue that celebrates the beauty of the female form—it is a kick-start to the many daring changes Singapore is embracing."

I view some of these daring changes as pluses for Singapore. Many other Singaporeans, I know, shake their heads in disapproval or dismay.

Some people are even angry at, for instance, the coming of the casinos. Are such developments acts of economic necessity or desperation, or gradual steps forward to a more open-minded society?

Student Muhammad says in an article headlined Wag the Dog, a title borrowed from the 1997 political satire movie: "Decades of government instruction has shown that the administration firmly wags the people."

For a society where crazy censorship is the norm (and at times a little excessive), granting (a) licence to a crazy show where (semi-) nude women would be allowed to dance on stage before a live audience represents quite a big, crazy step!"

Quite. And then, following his double-meaning use of the word crazy, it got crazier. After news reports that the Crazy Horse show was not prancing well enough by the Singapore River, the minimum admission age has been reduced to 18.

However, the recent change in leadership, together with the call for youths to become involved and speak out, might actually signal a change in mindset, one where the people have a say in deciding the social landscape.

I wonder whether Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's third National Day Rally speech, with all its unusual touches, sent a sufficiently strong signal to young people that our nation is on course towards the desired, zanier-than-before direction.

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