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Foreign politicians offer relief from mutterings of some Malaysian leaders

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NOT every politician is as fortunate these days as British Prime Minister Tony Blair. At 46 he has been told his 45-year-old wife, Cherie that she's pregnant.

Splashed in the London press then was his statement: "This baby is more important than my election win."

The couple has a daughter aged 11 and two boys aged 13 and 15. It is now said that by the time the fourth child goes to school Blair will be drawing his pension.

Surely forgiven was Blair's explanation that the baby was conceived after the couple's Tuscan holiday.

"Not that Tuscany is not romantic," he added.

He is now reconciled to waking up again at night to look after the crying baby.

As he recalled: "It always seemed to be my turn to get up in the middle of the night last time we had children."

If only some other politicians could talk like that and not be recounting yet again the number of votes they collected or lost.

Not so fortunate is best-selling author Jeffrey Archer who was forced to quit the race for the post of Lord Mayor of London.

This was after admitting that he had asked a friend to lie before a court case about his relationship with a prostitute some 13 years ago.

Published in London papers was a picture of the prostitute with a come-hither look on the bed.

Evidently his own adventures are no less enthralling than those written in his books such as Kane and Abel, First Among Equals and Not a Penny More.

Stories about foreign politicians provide a welcome relief from the mutterings of soul searching among some Malaysian politicians from whichever party following last month's elections.

The Opposition parties - Pas, DAP, Keadilan and Parti Rakyat failed in their ultimate objective: to deny Barisan Nasional its aim to attain more than a two-third majority.

In the event three of DAP's top leaders were rejected by the voters. Only 10 out of its 47 candidates won.

Meanwhile Keadilan won only five out of 59 Parliamentary seats sought. Pas won 27 out of 63 Parliamentary seats contested.

Several government ministers and deputy ministers also lost. As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it: "You win some, you lose some."

Certain comments in the Bahasa press in the aftermath of the elections merit mention.

Highlighted was the defeat of Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar whose long tenure as Menteri Besar ended when Terengganu fell into Pas's embrace after 38 years of BN rule.

Among critical analyses was one by Alias Ali, former Deputy Minister and journalist who likened Umno Terengganu as a lame warrior beset by internal disputes and disenchantment among its ordinary members.

Mentioned was unhappiness over the selection of candidates at several divisional levels.

In one particular constituency the ballot boxes for choice of candidates were said to have been locked and sealed although many were still waiting

to cast their papers.

In Alias' estimation some 24 per cent of the 168,550 Umno members opposed the candidates chosen by the party leaders.

Also under criticism in the Bahasa press was former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid following election of eight Pas Members of Parliament and 12 State Assemblymen.

Noted was the campaign conducted by Pas some three years before the elections since Kedah had long been targeted by the party apart from other northern States.

Mentioned then were some of the campaigns launched by Sanusi such as planting padi on rooftops, jihad to abolish poverty, Mat Jenin soccer teams and courting one's own wife or mengorat isteri as termed in Malay.

As in Terengganu there were criticisms about the choice of new candidates in Kedah but this was refuted in Sanusi's statement later.

Mention could be made about the selection of Bahadurn Shah Mat Isa as candidate in the Baling Parliamentary constituency.

He was for a long time Sanusi's political secretary and was well-known to voters in the area. He lost to Taib Azamuddin, former chief Imam of Masjid Negara by just 1,394 votes.

Meanwhile an "old timer" candidate, Datuk Hamid Othman, former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department lost to Professor Shahnon Ahmad from Pas by just 478 votes.

What price old and new candidates then? Worthy of mention among new candidates is Professor Mahader Mohd Khir who won the Parliamentary seat for Sungai Petani.

He polled 31,875 votes, beating his Pas opponent Johari Ahmad by a majority of 12,133 votes.

Prof Mahader is well-known in academic circles and has often participated in seminars and symposiums on a host of topics.

By the look of things he has the potential to be Menteri Besar and or Minister. In good time, that is.

Recalled by this scribe was the sight of Mahader during the Indonesian elections last June in Jakarta walking alongside hundreds of demonstrators notebook in hand as if he was a journalist.

Mayhaps his short stint as observer did him good during his election campaign in Sungai Petani.

For some is the reminder not to pass judgment in haste as is the case with certain sections of the foreign media with thier bias and own agenda.

Theirs is the aim to provoke and manipulate conflicts in the Malaysian political arena as opposed to our own efforts to seek consensus in a society multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural in character.

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