

29/12/2003

Let's say `no' to war

POLITICS:

BEST:

1. Giant anti-war marches

All around the world, millions of people banded together in thunderous protest against war and killing. Is there any sweeter sound? It's hard to think of one. This was global citizenry at its best.

2. Tun M's advice for older politicians to step down

Step down from leading positions, said former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and make way for fresh political faces. Excellent idea, and there's no excuse now since the man himself did it. Sadly, some ignored it.

3. Amina Lawal winning her appeal

Her conviction was overturned by a Nigerian syariah court. If it hadn't been, Amina, a single mother of a two-year-old girl, would have been stoned to death for adultery. The case gained international sympathy, with Brazil even offering her asylum. The verdict was an enormous human rights triumph.

4. Japan's masked politician

The spirit of Ultraman lives. A Japanese wrestler who entered politics refused to take off his mask for his new job. Masanori Murakawa, known in the ring as The Great Sasuke, did however compromise by sticking the official emblem of his region on the vinyl facewear.

5. Indian bride says no to dowry demand

India's most famous runaway bride, Nisha Sharma, refused to marry the groom because of extravagant dowry demands. The long list included air-conditioners, television sets, and over US\$20,000 (RM76,000). Nisha struck one for women's rights and became an anti-dowry celebrity. Her groom was booked under the Anti-Dowry Act and spent what was supposed to be his wedding night in jail.

WORST:

1. The War on Iraq

2. The War on Iraq

3. The War on...Oh well, you get the idea.

3a. Dr David Kelly's suicide

Good guy? Fall guy? Who knows? Dr David Kelly, renowned scientist and former adviser to the British government, killed himself in July. Kelly was named as the source of articles claiming that official information on Iraq's WMDs had been exaggerated. Say it again, with feeling: Worst political event of the year - The War on Iraq

4. California Governor Recall Election

A porn star, a 20-year-old college student, Gary Coleman, a basketball player and a lethally oversized Meccano toy - no, it's not the rejected cast of the Lord of the Rings. These are candidates who ran for California Governor, with the Meccano toy coming out tops.

5. Pas offers dress tips

Now, few things can beat the above, but we have a home-grown contender because Malaysia Boleh! Pas launched a campaign - which included a fashion show - to teach women to dress "correctly" to prevent rape. It did not, however, explain why little children and women with headscarves continue to be victims.

AWARDS

Quiet Triumph Award: Many commentators expect blood-soaked power transitions in the developing world. Malaysia's was characterised by calm, dignity and grace.

Surprise, Surprise Award: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi's unexpected visit to the Immigration Department was a pleasant surprise for those who had spent hours waiting in line. Yes indeed: the man at the top has his eye on the bottom line.

* Anticlimactic event of the year: Pas blueprint on Islamic state.

After years of boasting a cutting-edge plan, the document was released and immediately recognised as an election gimmick. What makes this stand out is that Pas confirmed it.