

# MAHATHIR'S MAGIC BLEND TO ACHIEVE A BEAUTIFUL DREAM

SM 11 APR 1987

IT IS not a catchword. But if only lip service is given to it, it may become a cliché signifying little of any real import. It cannot be taken for granted. Yet in Japan, "productivity" is a magic word that sustains the highest level of industrial growth.

In one of the most important speeches made in recent years, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's pronouncement at last week's seminar has given an authoritative and urgent ring to this key concept in modern development.

It was the first time that the nation's top leader had addressed it at length and with such thoroughness to drive home the need for higher productivity in nation-building in the 1980s.

The PM had unexpectedly started with a homily on the evils of waste. They are all wasteful of human and material resources which, he said, "should be used to the best advantage." The point has been well made: Wasteful habits must go!

According to Dr Mahathir, productivity is defined as increased output without a corresponding increase in monetary input. How do we achieve this? Can we legislate productivity? Ruling this out, he said that the answer must be sought through productivity — and making it everybody's responsibility.

Thus the logic of the work ethic, which springs from the correct attitude

towards work as found and exemplified in Japan. "What we need," he said, "is a drastic change in attitude on the part of everybody concerned." How true!

In an interesting paradox, the PM talked of no one being indispensable and of everyone being indispensable. He means that everyone has a role to play. How true again! The message is simply this: "Take pride in your work and do not under-estimate its importance."

Productivity training in schools and incentives for productivity are two of his proposals that will have to be implemented quickly. The national target of 15-20 per cent increase in productivity is realistic and achievable, given the necessary direction and impetus

from the top and the support of the masses.

Behind the call for productivity is actually the hope and ambition of a clear-sighted, pragmatic and purposeful leader who is intent on building a self-reliant nation that can pull together as one big team. This is the practical way to make the dream of a good life for all Malaysians come true.

There's also a timely warning. The pursuit of material progress should not decline into a money-minded "ringgit" chase in the country. "If this goes on," he has warned, "it is likely that the individual will forget or lose the human values of affection, kindness, consideration and love for God."