

The Mahathir

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Motivation

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad strikes the observer as a medical doctor with a gentle bedside manner. Indeed, all those who have worked closely with him say that he is a man who never loses his temper. But behind that gentleness lies an inner toughness. A quiet strength.

He may not be a charismatic person in the popular sense of the word; he does command a lot of respect and regard.

His style — decisive, and aggressive when it comes to results — sets him apart.

Many say his forthrightness and his courageous views on matters he feels strongly about are new phenomena for this country. Such candour at first can shock a little. But people are getting used to it now and are accepting the fact that they have a Prime Minister who calls a spade a spade.

Dr Mahathir realises that many things in this country have got stuck in a rut; the pace and many attitudes need to be changed.

There is a need to break away from the stick-in-the-mud conventional methods, changing the pace automatically means staying ahead of problems instead of just keeping abreast of them. Or even worse, being one step behind.

In many of the things he has done, the intention is to jolt people out of their apathy, out of their reluctance to change for the better.

While paying tribute to achievements of the past he has nevertheless reminded Malaysians that they must not allow their pride in the past to blind them to the problems that face them in the future.

Dr Mahathir wants everybody to perform — he wants a high degree of productivity. He wants each and every Malaysian to have pride in his work. He abhors inefficiency.

It has a positive effect because psychologically anyone who is easily identifiable dares not shirk his duties when dealing with members of the public. The hood of anonymity is removed.

There is little doubt that one of the Prime Minister's top priorities is that the civil service should rise to the heights of achievement it is capable of. He has frequently stressed this in all his pronouncements.

His insistence on punctuality, a greater sense of responsibility and higher productivity by every civil servant reflects his determination to see a civil service that lives up to its name and objectives.

Dr Mahathir has always placed great emphasis on Ministerial response to complaints by the people whether oral, through letters or through the Press.

He expects the Minister concerned to investigate the complaints and attend to them. This expectation clearly has its roots in his Government's determination to deal with the grievances of the people.

Dr Mahathir has often declared that he wants to see a Malaysia whose people will set an example and win the

reans indiscriminately.

There appears to be some misunderstanding of the Prime Minister's intentions in this respect. Certainly he does not want us to walk around in Kimonos and wooden sandals and eat raw fish...

It is a question of grafting, not transplanting.

The Japanese and South Korean "miracles" — emerging from the ashes of disastrous wars to develop economies that are the envy of the rest of the world — have been achieved primarily because of the attitude of their workers.

Dr Mahathir wants Malaysians to emulate the Japanese singleness of purpose and devote their lives to the achievement of the objectives they have set for themselves.

In contrast, he has nothing but contempt for laziness and wastage. The British workers' attitude towards work as reflected in continual industrial unrest is totally unacceptable to him and to the people of Malaysia. It is an impediment to the progress.

The mandate given by Malaysian voters to the Barisan Nasional Govern-

In the past year the country has seen a Prime Minister who lost no time in getting down to brass tacks, zeroing-in on the hub of the problems as he sees them.

Right from the outset, Dr Mahathir declared that he expected every Minister to pull his weight and to take a deep personal interest in his portfolio.

He pulls no punches in his criticisms of errant Ministers. He never browbeats although sometimes he gets a little annoyed.

He goes straight to the point and attacks the practical aspects of the problem, citing examples and asking in no uncertain terms that they be rectified quickly.

On telephones, for instance, it is said that Dr Mahathir, whilst talking about an overseas call, marvelled at the clarity of the conversation compared with the deplorable quality of local calls.

He followed up with a characteristic remark: "I simply cannot understand why this should be so."

Evidently, these remarks were meant to be heard clearly by the Minister concerned with the intention that action be taken on it.

He always follows up on his criticisms.

Dr Mahathir practises what he preaches, always setting an example in what he asks of others. He drives himself as hard as he drives others. Whilst some leaders content themselves with symbolic gestures at ceremonies, Dr Mahathir prefers to take the lead.

The latest move of wearing a name tag, which enforces a greater sense of responsibility in carrying out one's duties, is a case in point.

respect of other nations.

That is his vision. He wants to see a Malaysia to which the people, irrespective of ethnic origin, give their unswerving loyalty.

To this end, naturally, Dr

Mahathir has often enough exhorted the private sector to strive harder to maximise its resources.

He has a conviction that Malaysia with its abundant natural resources, coupled with youthful human resources, is capable of becoming the foremost industrialised nation in South-East Asia.

It is basically a question of careful exploitation of the former and proper harnessing of the latter.

Not easy

That he wants Malaysia to be a very progressive country in which the resources are fully utilised without waste is quite clear.

In introducing his "Look East" concept, the Prime Minister is merely asking Malaysians to do away with counter-productive Western attitudes towards work and to adopt Japanese and South Koreans work ethics which are more productive and suitable.

The Prime Minister is not asking Malaysians to copy the Japanese and South Ko-

ment strengthens Dr Mahathir's hand in building the kind of nation he wants. The ball is now in the people's court to demonstrate that they are with him — not just at the ballot box but also in action.

Dr Mahathir himself realises it will not be easy. He has said right from the beginning that the "most important thing to him is to try to work out how to motivate the people".

There is definitely a new awareness of the need for discipline in every facet of Malaysian life.

Ultimately, it is a question of leaders at all levels, in every field of activity, taking the lead in translating this awareness into deeds.

So long as we have leaders who live ostentatiously, feathering their own nests, isolating themselves from the people, — intentionally or otherwise — and paying only lip service to Dr Mahathir's ideals, for so long will his vision remain mere castles in the air.