

It began with the Look East policy

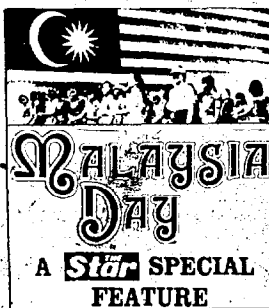
Dr. Mahathir Mohd -

31 AUG 1983

First it was *Look East*, and then came *Malaysia Incorporated* and still later *Privatisation*. All are apparently concepts thought of by the 2M administration to bring about a change in attitude in the Malaysian society, in particular, attitude towards work.

Also, the concepts are intended to help foster a climate whereby the Government, private sector and workers will work hand-in-hand to help build a rich and prosperous Malaysia.

Look East began to take shape with an announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in late 1981 that government officers and workers should emulate the example of their counterparts in Japan.



berate policy of looking elsewhere as well for examples.

"If you have learnt all the bad work ethics of the West before, it is about time you learn some of the good work ethics in the East. But if there are aspects of bad work ethics in the East, we don't follow that either," he explained.

He said that Japanese work ethics, which place the organisation above self, had a place here and added that Malaysians could learn from Japanese technology.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was apparently impressed with the rapid development of Japan after the devastation of the Second World War and the ability of the country's economy to weather the recession while most western nations were badly affected.

He attributed the success to three main reasons — the Japanese work ethics, its management technique (which emphasises group rather than individual development) and its technology.

He explained more fully the *Look East* policy in an interview last year marking the completion of his first year in office as Prime Minister.

He said then that Malaysia had traditionally been looking to the West for its needs. Looking East is looking in the opposite direction, a deli-

VALUES

"Look East means we should resort to other sources than just the West and this doesn't mean that we are going to give up the West entirely. What is good in the West we will still follow but here is a source of ethical values, systems and everything else which is useful to us. So why shouldn't we take a deliberate effort to acquire this from the East?"

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir feels a lot can be learned and adopted from the Japanese and South Koreans.

In Japan, the Government and businessmen welcomed Malaysia's *Look East* policy and pledged to help Malaysians acquire the necessary technological and management skills.

There has been an influx of Japanese businessmen and personnel since the announcement of the policy and Ja-

● TURN TO PAGE FOUR

WORKING TOGETHER

● FROM PAGE THREE

panese companies have been awarded several major contracts in the hope that transfer of technology and management skills will take place.

There has, however, so far been no assessment of the situation to determine the degree to which transfer of technology and management expertise has taken place.

Following the *Look East* policy, the *Malaysia Incorporated* concept was borrowed from the Japanese example.

Following Japan's successful development into an economic superpower, some writers branded the country "Japan Incorporated."

The name was given to reflect the close co-operation in trade and industry between the Japanese private sector and the Government to assist Japanese companies compete against foreign companies.

This close co-operation between the Japanese Government and the private sector was attributed as one of the reasons for the competitive position of Japanese



companies and their products in overseas markets.

The co-operation is reflected in the attitudes of the Japanese government officers who give whatever assistance they can, in terms of approvals and permits, to help the companies increase their productivity and compete in the international market.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir wants a similar attitude to prevail among government officers and the private sector in Malaysia.

Traditionally, government officers have looked upon the private sector with suspicion and distrust, whose activities were to be closely supervised and moni-

tored so that there were no irregularities.

Malaysia Incorporated calls for a revamping of this attitude to one whereby the Government and the private sector look upon each other as partners in the progress of the country to the common betterment of all concerned.

AWARENESS

Government officers will now have to review their attitudes towards businessmen and give them all the help they need to promote their legitimate business activities.

The private sector, on the other hand, will have to develop a greater awareness of its social

roles and obligations in bringing about greater prosperity and higher living standards in the country.

The concept, though good on paper, will not be easily brought to fruition in practice as it involves a drastic and radical change in long-ingrained lifestyles and habits.

Privatisation, however, is not directly related to the concepts of *Look East* and *Malaysia Incorporated*.

It refers to the handing over of certain operations traditionally handled by the Government to the private sector, which hopefully will be able to run the operations with greater efficiency as the operation will be profit motivated.

Operations slated to be handed over to the private sector include railways, telecommunications, television and radio, and some utilities.

The concept appears to be part of the Government's economic strategy of making the private sector the prime mover of the economy following the recession which has severely curtailed government funds.