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Larger doses of discipline needed to succeed in life besides breaks

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ONE needs discipline to succeed in life, besides the necessary breaks of course.

With discipline, one can rise and ride the waves, so to speak. In the last few weeks, I have come across several people who visibly demonstrated that it was discipline which kept them up and about, doing well in their respective undertakings.

Zaman, whom I wrote about three weeks ago, has shown how much he has benefited by sticking to a timetable which has resulted in a new person; Badrul, who caught me by surprise with his slim, new look; and Muralee, who's going around preaching the many pluses in maintaining strict discipline in whatever chores that he's doing.

But discipline is so difficult to instil, and even more to maintain. I salute those who can keep up with their routines in whatever it is that they're pursuing - be it health and fitness; pursuing a hobby; work; voluntary work.

Each of these people I met swore that they wouldn't have achieved what they did without discipline.

Among those I observe as having a strong grip on discipline is the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Those who work closely with him often tell me that the PM has such strong discipline that many others would find it difficult to catch up with him. I've seen this quite often in the course of my work, be it in the country or outside.

At the Smart Partnership Dialogue in Langkawi in the early part of the week, I was once again reminded how much of a disciplinarian our PM is. It makes me wonder how such a high-profile person could keep up with the pressures of high office and yet appear energetic and alert enough for most of the day, and night. Another medical doctor told me that the PM's ability to maintain a consistently high state of alertness was because of his physical fitness.

It's simple, the doctor explained. How else could a person keep a full working diary if he was not physically fit?

Dr Mahathir's schedule at the Langkawi International Dialogue begins with a breakfast meeting at about 7.30am. This means he has to be up and about well before that. Of course, Muslims have to be up for their subuh prayers well before dawn but how many of us do that? Only the devout and the disciplined perhaps...

After the breakfast meeting, which doubles up as a workshop as well, the PM then chairs the morning session which starts at 9am. With so many foreign heads of government, the PM often steps out of the main conference room for bilateral consultations with his counterparts. These are high-profile encounters, mind you.

This is followed by lunch, and inevitably, a short tour of ongoing projects on the island. And by the way, the PM does his own driving while on the island. He drives a small four-wheel-drive vehicle round the island, stopping to make enquiries on whatever meets his eyes.

The PM also participates in some of the afternoon deliberations, offering inputs from time to time. This is followed by dinner which is usually accompanied by a short address.

On the opening night, Dr Mahathir spoke at length on globalisation and smart partnership. With television cameras on full standby, he can't

afford to make a slip during delivery.

All in, the PM has to maintain his cool, be alert and pro-active. But he's got plenty of practice. How could this be possible, I asked my doctor friend. "Discipline, my friend, discipline ... and full fitness level. When you're holding a high-profile position and involved in daily decision-making, you need to be disciplined and physically fit.

"Physical fitness helps remove the everyday stress of high-profile jobs and decision-making tasks. It takes a lot out of you when you have to decide everyday. Your decision may affect the livelihood of others. If this is the case, you have to stay fresh and alert always... Our PM is like that.

"I've seen him meeting people late in the evening when important decisions have to be made. He looks as fresh and alert as if this was the first order of the day. If only I could have a fraction of that discipline... But let me tell you, discipline can be addictive, which we all need to be a better worker and person."

But as I said earlier, discipline is difficult to maintain, be it intellectual or physical. But the end result is there to see. It was discipline which brought Muhammad Ali the world boxing championship; that gave Whitney Houston countless singing awards; that gained Gandhi Indian independence. Hopefully, it's also discipline that will bring Malaysia more success in the coming decades.

In any case, that's the medicine prescribed by the doctor!

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