

29/01/2004

Review does not reflect author's ideas in essay

Prof Clive Kessler

IN a review of Reflections: The Mahathir Years edited by Bridget Welsh, your reviewer U-En Ng does me the honour of discussing prominently, and at some length, my contribution to that collection (NST, Jan 21).

Unfortunately, I cannot recognise myself or my ideas in the summary and characterisation that your reviewer provides of my essay.

The arguments that Ng hangs on the peg of a consideration of my work - namely, that the Asian financial crisis of 1997 posed to Dr Mahathir's Government an administrative decision whether or not to allow greater political space for dissenters, and that I suggest that it should have - are, in their own right interesting assertions.

But they have nothing to do with my analysis in Reflections.

What I had to say was something rather different. The dilemma I discussed is one focused on the choices now facing Tun Dr Mahathir's successors, not on the crisis management options and policies of an era now past.

Your reviewer has read rather too much into my analysis.

May I suggest that those interested should buy the collection edited by Welsh and read there, together with the many other contributions, my own essay.

I would rather be held answerable and criticised for what I actually argue, and not for what others think that I have.

Prof CLIVE KESSLER  
Univeristy of New South Wales  
Sydney, Australia