

27/06/2003

Dr M's most important legacy

Wan Ahmad Shihab Ismail

THE proposal to institutionalise the thoughts of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, as mooted by National Economic Action Council executive director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and later endorsed by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the recent Umno general assembly is truly an excellent and timely one.

In the more than two decades that he has been at the helm, Dr Mahathir has shocked and astounded the world with his often unconventional yet consistently pragmatic approach to resolving issues and problems.

With his sharp observation of the state of the world and blunt criticism of those who are unjust and immoral, admirers and detractors alike cannot but concede that the Prime Minister is a statesman par excellence, who has turned nation building into a fine art.

As Dr Mahathir prepares for retirement and Malaysians prepare to accept that reality, it is imperative that every effort is taken to ensure that the invaluable lessons from the experience of the Prime Minister in the last 22 years are well preserved for the benefit of future generations.

There is much to learn from all that has unfolded in those eventful years.

However, it is important that what we conserve is not just the history lessons, but also the thought process and the methods of translating ideas and vision into tangible reality.

We must do more than just learn about the achievements; we must learn what lay behind those achievements, the motivations and the larger objectives.

The Institut Pemikiran Dr Mahathir, as it is being touted, must not be just a mere archive of facts and figures. Like its namesake, it must be a dynamic, progressive and pro-active body that would continue to contribute to the process of nation building.

It should be made up of and headed by people who are responsive, results-oriented and highly attuned to the ever-changing global status quo. Most importantly, it must be an institute that is able to harness the enormous wealth of experience and skills gained over the last two decades and fully utilise them towards finding practical solutions for contemporary problems facing the country, for this generation and many generations to come.

Done properly, the proposed institute can be a source of guidance and inspiration not just for Malaysians but for students of political science and governance all over the world. If this can be achieved Dr Mahathir's thoughts and ideas will continue to benefit Malaysia and the world long into the future. This will then be Malaysia's gift to the world and Dr