

17/05/2003

More action, less talk

ACTION, so people say, speaks louder than words and, not only that, words, some insist, are cheap. This, essentially, is the Prime Minister' message to those who will succeed him, and the youth, that is, tomorrow's leaders. Speaking on National Youth Day he urged his audience to stop squabbling over the Government's policies and get on with making these policies work. Feasibility studies are commendable but it cannot be the excuse for inaction.

An unequivocal example of the truth of this belief can be observed from the consequences of the 1997 regional financial crisis. For all the economic theorising - especially those so beloved of the International Monetary Fund - it was the hands-on pragmatism of such as the Prime Minister which won the day.

If the IMF, with its bookish approach that does not take cognisance of local particularities had been allowed to take precedence over homegrown decisions, then Malaysia would have, in all probability, fallen down the economic cliff as did Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Fortunately, Dr Mahathir is the epitome of action and more action. This saved the day.

Those who will replace him, whether in the immediate or distant future must not mistake this behest to mean one of uninformed, ill-considered actions. Rather, there is today no excuse for inertia resulting from lack of information. The aim is to be not just fast on one's feet, always. One must also be able to think on one's feet.

No longer is the laid back rhythms of old acceptable in a globalised world where the wealth gap between nations is proving dangerous. Development catchup is not one that will accommodate endless, pedantic deliberations. Intense global competition has made the adage "the early bird catches the worm" a truism ignored only at one's own peril.

Today, it is not deliberations that will win the day. Instead, to win we must be ready to make even a semblance of a good idea work. As pointed out in his speech, if this worldview had not been practised by Dr. Mahathir, neither Proton nor Langkawi will have happened and thus the national pride that is cementing together the disparate populace would not be forthcoming. Action, therefore, is fundamental to national integration.