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Mahathir-Proton (With pix)

MALAYSIA NEEDS TO TAKE BIGGER STEPS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 21<sup>94</sup> (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today stressed the need for Malaysia to take bigger strides in the car manufacturing industry to catch up with other countries.

In his speech and also while speaking to reporters after launching a book on the national car here, the prime minister said such an effort needed to be taken as Malaysia was still behind many other countries in that sector.

"I always want things to be done faster as we are behind others. The only way you can catch up with people is to run faster than the people you are trying to catch up with," he said.

He said that even though the Japanese partners in the national car project were fond of reminding Malaysia "to take step by step, I would like to take longer steps, that's all.

"It is still step by step. We get along fine with our Japanese partners. They must excuse us if we take longer steps because we need to catch up with people," he added. -- more

JO JK

21/03/16-58MST

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Mahathir-Proton 2 Kuala Lumpur

Asked to name specific areas in the car industry where he felt Malaysia should try to forge ahead, Dr Mahathir said the engine and transmission system was the most complex part that needed to be mastered by Malaysians.

"Until we can master that, until we can reach a stage where we can design our own engines and produce them, we have not yet really achieved progress in motorcar manufacturing," he said.

He said although the Japanese partners had not indicated that Malaysia should slow down, their philosophy of doing things step by step was too slow.

As a solution, the prime minister spoke of the possibility of getting similar technology from other countries and added that Proton had received many proposals from Europe, United States and also Japan.

Asked whether that would mean that Proton cars would be fitted with non-Mitsubishi engine in the near future, he said no such decision had been made. -- more

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21/03/17-01MST

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Mahathir-Proton 3 Kuala Lumpur

On whether Malaysia is ready to build its own engine and transmission system, Dr Mahathir said: "You can't decide whether you are ready or not until you try, than you will find out how much you know and how much you don't." No target date had been set for the production, he added.

He also touched on the royalty that Proton had to pay to Mitsubishi on the car and also certain components which in a way had contributed to the manufacturing cost of the car.

"I don't know exactly how much (royalty is paid every year) but we can bring down the price (of Proton cars) if we don't have to pay royalty. There is a charge when you don't know how to do things yourself. You have to buy these things and it raises the cost of the car," he said.

In his speech Dr Mahathir said he was glad that Malaysia made the move into manufacturing as the situation in the country would not have been the same today if it had just depended solely on commodities such as tin, rubber and palm oil.

On the book, written by lawyer Datuk Tharu T. Tharumaganam, he hoped that Malaysians would be able to learn about the history of the conception of the car which could be applied to other industries as well. -- more

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Mahathir-Proton 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur

"I hope we will be able to learn how to take risk and go into areas which are not only strange but at times quite unfriendly but one day we would be able to master most of these skills and we will go on to produce our own things."

Earlier in his speech, Tharumaganam said that all proceeds from the 128-page book, "The Making of the National Car - Not Just a Dream", would go towards funding studies in automotive engineering and technology at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

Tharumaganam, who specialises in corporate and corporate finance and corporate acquisition, was one of the nine members of the original Hicom National Car Project negotiating team involved in formulating the terms of the joint venture and associated agreements with Mitsubishi Corporation in 1983.

He is also joint secretary to the boards of Proton Bhd and Hicom Bhd since their incorporation.

The book, priced at RM65, summarises the rationale, formulation and present-day operations of Proton in the context of current national policy objectives for industrialisation. -- Bernama

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