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PM: Don't waste time talking (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his successors will not be able to achieve anything much if they continue to "talk, talk and talk" and engage in polemics to change existing policies.

He said his successors (youths) who would take over the country's leadership would not be able to transform the country into a developed nation if they wasted time debating existing policies.

Dr Mahathir said although there were imperfections in the country's policies, everyone must continue to implement them and carry out the plans which had been laid out.

"Although there were flaws in the policies, we have to strive to implement them and carry out the plans that we have laid out as this is the way to develop the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he realised that the present generation could have made mistakes which needed to be corrected but the fact remained that Malaysia had experienced rapid development.

"However, these developments have yet to reach our target of becoming a developed nation," he said at the launch of the National Youth Day celebrations 2003 at Putra Stadium, Bukit Jalil.

Themed "Driving the Nation's Excellence", the ceremony was attended by 20,000 youths from 39 organisations.

Present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, his deputy Datuk Ong Tee Keat and Malaysian Youth Council president Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo.

Dr Mahathir said the country was able to achieve many successes as "we did not only debate and indulge in polemics but we implemented our plans".

The Prime Minister cited the national car project as one of the country's many projects which was initially viewed with apprehension by many quarters but had proven to be the biggest achievement for Malaysia.

"When we first proposed to produce the national car, there were lots of debates on whether the project would be successful, whether it was suitable for a developing country which did not possess the technology nor the money.

"If we had allowed these debates to prolong without a final decision made, there would be no Proton, no national car today," he said to cheers from the 20,000-odd youths.

Dr Mahathir said there was no doubt that there would be talk of viability in any projects, but success can be achieved if everyone was determined to adapt their approaches and efforts.

He said the same apprehension surfaced when the Government proposed the development of Langkawi.

"There were those who said that Langkawi would not be as popular as Bali, but today it is as popular as any other (holiday) island," he said.

He said the success story of the Government's policies could also be seen in its success in harmonising the relationship between the races, thus avoiding racial clashes during the 1997/98 economic crisis.