

SHAH ALAM, JULY 9 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY LAUNCHED THE PROTON SAGA -- MALAYSIA'S OWN CAR -- AND DECLARED THAT THE NATIONAL CAR PROJECT PROVED THE CAPABILITY OF MALAYSIA AND ITS PEOPLE.

+DETERMINED EFFORTS, WHOLEHEARTED DEDICATION AND THE WILLINGNESS TO FACE UP TO CHALLENGES WILL SURELY HELP US ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES,+ SAID THE PRIME MINISTER WHO AT THE SAME FUNCTION OPENED THE \$550 MILLION PERUSAHAAN OTOMOBIL NASIONAL (PROTON) PLANT HERE. IT IS EXPECTED TO PRODUCE 7,500 UNITS OF THE NATIONAL CAR FROM NOW UNTIL DECEMBER.

HE PRESSED A BUTTON TO ROLL OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE THE FIRST MADE-IN-MALAYSIA CAR AT 10.30 AM SHARP AND MINUTES LATER, THE PRIME MINISTER RECEIVED THE KEYS TO THE FIRST PROTON -- A BLUE FOUR-DOOR SEDAN.

SOON AFTER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR TOOK TO THE WHEEL OF THE CAR AND DROVE IT AROUND WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF HICOM (HEAVY INDUSTRIES CORPORATION OF MALAYSIA), TAN SRI JAMIL JAN, SEATED BESIDE HIM.

THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY ABOUT 1,000 GUESTS, INCLUDING DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, SELANGOR MENTERI BESAR DATUK HAJI AHMAD RAZALI ALI, CABINET MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE HEAVY INDUSTRY PROGRAMME WAS TO EXTEND AND STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL BASE IN EFFORTS TO BECOME A INDUSTRIALISED NATION.

ALTHOUGH MALAYSIA WAS MAKING IT INTO THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE ONLY NOW, IT WOULD EVENTUALLY SUCCEED IN ITS PROGRAMMES IF THE PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO WORK HARD, BE DISCIPLINED AND DEDICATED AND MANAGE EFFICIENTLY, HE SAID.

+TODAY, OUR COUNTRY MOVES ONE STEP FURTHER TOWARDS INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS. THE NATIONAL CAR FACTORY AND THE PRODUCTION OF THE PROTON SAGA ARE PROOF OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE SUCCESS OF THE NATIONAL CAR PROJECT WOULD GIVE THE NATION'S ECONOMY +A GREAT PUSH.+

+WHILE WE ARE PROUD TO PRODUCE OUR OWN CAR, THIS PROJECT WILL ALSO BE THE CATALYST FOR THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT INDUSTRIES SUCH AS THOSE RELATING TO METAL, RUBBER AND PLASTICS,+ HE SAID. -- MORE
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MAHATHIR-CAR 3 SHAH ALAM

THROUGH THE NATIONAL CAR PROJECT, THE COMPONENTS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY COULD HELP BOOST THE COUNTRY'S ENGINEERING CAPABILITY AND ABSORPTION OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY, HE ADDED.

FURTHERMORE, THE COMPONENTS MANUFACTURING SECTOR WOULD GENERATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT AND EMPLOYMENT, HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID MANUFACTURERS SHOULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CAR COMPONENTS SO THAT THEY COULD CATER FOR THE OVERSEAS MARKET AS WELL.

EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO PROMOTE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT SO THAT THE QUALITY OF GOODS PRODUCED BY MALAYSIANS WAS ASSURED, HE SAID.

IN CONNECTION WITH THIS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HAILED THE MOVE BY SYARIKAT PERUSAHAAN OTOMOBIL NASIONAL SDN BHD (PROTON) TO SET UP A RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT IN EFFORTS TO ENSURE QUALITY OF THE CARS PRODUCED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE HOPED OTHER FIRMS WOULD EMULATE PROTON IN CARRYING OUT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES. MORE

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MAHATHIR 4 SHAH ALAM

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT THE PRODUCTION OF THE PROTON SAGA WAS TIMELY AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS CHECKING THE FLOW OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE BY ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE TO BUY MALAYSIAN-MADE GOODS.

HE URGED THE PEOPLE TO GIVE THEIR SUPPORT AND BUY THE PROTON SAGA THE QUALITY OF WHICH HE SAID WAS SIMILAR TO CARS PRODUCED OVERSEAS.

IN HIS SPEECH, PROTON CHAIRMAN TAN SRI JAMIL MOHAMED JAN SAID THE PRODUCTION OF THE PROTON SAGA REFLECTED MALAYSIA'S ATTAINMENT OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY.

HE SAID THAT THE PROTON SAGA WOULD BE SOLD FROM SEPTEMBER BY EDARAN OTOMOBIL NASIONAL SDN BERHAD (EON). -- BERNAMA
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