

# Dr M: No regrets about our car making industry

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KUCHING, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government had no reservations about its involvement in the automobile manufacturing industry which he described as "Malaysia's short cut to industrialisation."

He did not deny that it would be cheaper to import a car rather than manufacture one here.

However, he reminded Malaysians of the reason behind the Government's involvement in the manufacturing of automobiles.

"It is common knowledge that the automobile manufacturing industry will give insights into various engineering industries and production of metal products," he said when officially opening the local assembly facilities of Pacific Trucks by Sarawak Motor Industries in Bintawa, seven kilometres from here.

The Prime Minister said he was aware of the countless remarks about Malaysia going into the automobile manufacturing industry considering it was a young nation, industry-wise.

"I was asked by a Swe-

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dish industrialist during a visit to that country why Malaysia wanted to manufacture its own cars, and not just buy "the Volvo cars," he said as an example of some of the remarks.

"I have nothing against Volvo cars. They are wonderful machines and I am sure they sell quite well in this country," he added.

However, he told the Swedish industrialist that Malaysia was going into the motor car industry for the same reason that the Swedish started producing Volvos as their national car despite a market of eight million people only.

"They went in because they wanted to have the technology to build engines and manufacture other products.

"In the process, they acquired know-how to go into other businesses like the aircraft industry."

Of course, the Prime Minister said the easy way out was for Malaysia to import Japanese cars, which because of the large number of orders, would be cheaper.

But he said, the Americans wanted to build their own cars and so do the British, French and others.

"As such, I do not see why Malaysians should not produce their own cars."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysians would have to pay higher production costs for the national car.

"I feel Malaysians will feel it is a small price to pay for the short cut to industrialisation," he said.

He dismissed criticisms that manufacturing automobiles would be a monumental task. With the proper expertise and training, it was no big deal, he said.

However, he felt the main problem would be finding not only local but also foreign markets for locally manufactured automobiles.

In this respect, he urged Sarawak Motor Industries to sell their on and off-highway trucks manufactured with the co-operation of Pacific Truck and Trailer Limited of Canada (acquired by Kumpulan Inchcape in 1983) not only in Malaysia but also in other countries.

Kumpulan Inchcape chairman Tunku Shahbuddin Tunku Besar Burhanudin said in his speech delivered earlier that several models of these Pacific trucks had been specified and deve-