

After-sale service key to car export success

By Vijayan Menon

SHAH ALAM, Mon. — Edaran Otomobil Nasional Berhad must establish a satisfactory after-sale service in the countries in which it wants to market the Proton car, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This, he said, was important to ensure that the export of the national car, including to South countries did not end up as a failure.

"We must plan to ensure that export (of the car) to any country does not fail as it will be very difficult to recover once we fail," he told reporters after opening the new headquarters of EON and launching its 10th anniversary celebrations near here.

"We can expand (our exports) but we must ensure that we are able to offer quality cars and good after-sale service to ensure the success of the cars we sell abroad," he said.

He said unless this was done, EON may not be able to repair the cars sold should they develop faults.

On whether the Government would continue maxi-

"We believe we can reduce costs if we can achieve fully the transfer of knowledge of automotive engineering skills.

"We are still importing some of the components from Japan whose costs have escalated due to the increase in the value of the yen. We have to continue with the local content policy," he said.

On the sale of cars to certain countries through counter trade, he said this was because some countries did not have sufficient foreign exchange to buy the Malaysian car.

"So we import their products as payment for the cars we sell to them."

On whether EON could grow into a major conglomerate such as Mitsubishi Motors, Dr Mahathir said this would take time.

"Mitsubishi has a 100-year advantage over EON. But if we see EON's growth in a short span of 10 years, there is every possibility of it becoming a large conglomerate.

"I cannot tell how long it will take," he added.

He said EON and Proton had progressed rapidly and the level of automotive engineering in the country had reached a sophisticated level and "a level we could not have dreamt of before and one that we all can be proud of".

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missing the local content of the national car, he said it was necessary to ensure that 100 per cent of the stages, right from the design concept until production was done in the country.