

# EON must expand market, says PM

MALAYSIA needs to expand its overseas market by exploiting the economies of scale for it to emerge as a nation with an international class automotive industry.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the success of the national car hinged on Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd's (Proton) ability to penetrate the world market as the domestic market is small.

Proton has been able to penetrate markets in 15 foreign countries with sales exceeding 85,000 units.

Speaking at the opening of Edaran Otomobil Nasional Bhd's (EON) RM80 million headquarters in Jalan Glenmarie, Shah Alam, he said EON with its mar-

keting expertise was in a good position to help Proton exploit opportunities available in new overseas markets.

EON as a trading company can also boost sales of Proton cars abroad through trading on a counter trade basis.

EON is today known as the most successful automobile distribution company which has sold over half a million cars and command a 74 per cent share of the total passenger car market in the country.

"This is a major achievement to be proud of as there is no other company in the automobile industry which has sold as many cars as EON," he said.

Dr Mahathir said EON's success in marketing the na-

tional car in the country was due to its innovative and aggressive sales strategy.

It had carried out a successful and effective pre-launch campaign such as advance bookings, special Proton number plates, Sagarama and Sagathon throughout the country, he said.

"I am happy to see EON venturing overseas through its investments in Cycle and Carriage Ltd, a conglomerate in Singapore, and Proton Car Europe to market the national car in Europe as well as international general trading through EON Trading.

"These efforts are in line with the Government's policy of encouraging trading and investments in other

countries including those in the South."

He said the appointment of EON under the General Trading Company (GTC) programme reflected the government's faith in the company to help upgrade exports particularly to South nations.

Under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry's special programme with general trading companies, the government will provide RM2 million to promote trade and economic linkages between countries of the South.

The three selected local GTCs to take part in the programme are EON, Sime Darby Bhd and Kumpulan Guthrie Bhd.

On EON's headquarters, he said the complex would

help it to upgrade services to Proton owners.

"The 24-hour service centre (at the complex) which is the first of its kind in this region is a good example of EON's commitment to provide excellent after sales service to Proton owners as they will be able service their cars at any time of the day, 365 days a year."

EON chairman Tan Sri Jamil Mohamed Jan said the company's new headquarters was designed to meet the needs and demands of its sophisticated customers.

"It is consistent with its corporate mission to be Malaysia's leading automobile distributor..."

Dr Mahathir later launched the Aeroback version of the Proton Wira Limousine.