

Malaysia will have technology for full-fledged national

PM: We're picking

car within 15 years

up fast

By Syed Nadzri
and Azrin Azmi

RAWANG, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed confidence that a full-fledged Malaysian car will become a reality in 10 to 15 years in view of the rapid progress made in the country's automobile industry.

He said most companies took 50 to 60 years to produce their own cars.

Malaysia had progressed a little bit faster than most countries, he said, adding that maybe in the next 10 to 15 years, the country would have picked up enough technology on the engine and transmission to produce a full-fledged Malaysian car.

Dr Mahathir, who was speaking at a Press conference after opening Perodua's manufacturing plant at Serendah near here, was asked how much longer it would take before Malaysia could produce its own full-fledged national car.

The plant, covering 64,000 sq metres, is owned and operated by Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd. It marks another milestone in the country's automobile industry as it will produce Perodua Kancil, the second national car after the Proton make.

The Proton, which started production nine years ago, and the Perodua, which will hit the roads next month, are both produced with the aid of Japanese technology and design expertise, and the use of some imported components.

Dr Mahathir said the Gov-

ernment hoped Perodua would learn all the stages of manufacturing — from design to total production, including engineering work.

He was elaborating on his speech earlier when he said Perodua should not only look to one source in getting the benefits of technology transfer "but also towards other appropriate places in the world".

The Government, he said, would support these efforts but the initiative must come from Perodua itself.

Asked whether concerted efforts would be made to establish the car in the international market, he said a lot of hard work had to be put in considering the constraints.

"We do not have such a big local market, so our capacity in this industry is limited. We, therefore, have to export (the car).

"Most of the car-manufacturing countries rely on their domestic markets ... maybe only 40 per cent are exported. So, if we are efficient enough, perhaps the export element will be better."

To another question, he said Malaysia was seeking to export the Perodua to all countries if possible. "But it is a little difficult to penetrate the European market because of its small engine capacity (660cc)."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said Proton had served as an impetus in boosting the local automobile components industry after owners of assembly plants had regarded

Dr M sure Perodua will strive for success

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local components as "unnecessary evils".

"Car producers, mainly from Japan, were also reluctant to allow their parts to be replaced with made-in-Malaysia ones. That's why the Government's aspirations in industrialising the country's motor industry were bogged down initially."

Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Perodua would strive hard, without relying on too much outside support.

Also present at the ceremony were International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Perodua chairman Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badiozaman, Daihatsu Motor Company of Japan president Takashi Toyozumi and Japan Foreign Trade Council Inc president Koichiro Ejiri.

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