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Be competitive, auto industry told

RAWANG: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants the local automobile industry to be committed and work hard to compete in the international market.

The Prime Minister said he was confident that with proper planning and a high level of commitment, the objective could be achieved.

"Technology transfer can only be achieved and be meaningful when Malaysia can create and produce its own cars completely.

"In this respect, all efforts must be made to diversify sources of technical expertise and training to enable continuous growth in this industry," he said when opening the manufacturing

plant of Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) in Serendah, near here.

The Perodua plant, the manufacturer of the second national car, *Kancil*, was completed in February and has a production capacity of 45,000 cars annually.

Dr Mahathir said the Government hoped that Perodua would be able to produce wholly Malaysian-made automobiles.

He said it should have programmes to achieve that.

"Perodua must not only depend on one source for the transfer of technology but also other suitable places in the world.

"The Government will always support such efforts but the ini-

tiative must come from Perodua," he added.

He also urged Perodua to look out for business partners who were willing to provide the necessary technology and expertise.

Meanwhile, Perodua chairman Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badiozaman said plant operations had begun and it would achieve a peak production of 2,000 cars a month by December.

The cars will be marketed next month.

Among those present at the opening ceremony were Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib and Daihatsu Motor Co Ltd president Takashi Tovoiumi.