

Dr M: Malaysia emerging as important producer in region

Car centre for Asia

By Syed Nazri
and Saiful Azhar

LANGKAWI, Sat. — Malaysia is set to emerge as a centre for the production of cars for the rapidly growing Asian market, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said although the country's automobile industry was obviously in its infancy, it was expected to grow rapidly in the future.

"Apart from Proton and the Kancil, Malaysia looks ready to become a centre for the production of cars for the rapidly growing Asian market.

"It is true that most Asian countries want to produce their own cars. Even so, the demand for components, accessories and specialised cars and vehicles needs to be catered to," he said when opening the inaugural Langkawi International Motor Show (Limos '95) at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre.

The 10-day exhibition, which ends on Nov 5, is organised by Le Proton Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd, which is also involved in organising the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima).

Dr Mahathir said the country's robust economy had a tremendous impact on vehicle sales, which was expected to increase by 5.6 per cent annually.

Despite stringent controls, Proton had also managed to secure a market in

Britain and Singapore. At present, the Proton is exported to 28 countries, including some to continental Europe.

"There have been enquiries from many countries keen to import the Proton cars which now come in a number of models. The 660cc Kancil will also be exported once local demand is satisfied."

Dr Mahathir said the nation's remarkable economic performance was the factor contributing towards the growth of the automotive industry.

"Malaysia has become known for its steady economic growth which compares very well with several Asian newly industrialised countries."

From being a commodity producer, relying mostly on its exports of rubber and tin, Malaysia's total exports today, amounting to nearly US\$60 billion (RM150 billion) or 79 per cent of its total exports, was made up of manufactured goods and the Prime Minister expected both the proportion and the value to grow in the years ahead.

"A business-friendly Government has been able to attract investors, foreign and local, to use the country as a manufacturing base and 'profit centre'.

"This policy is helped by the fact that Malaysia is one of the most stable countries, politically.

"The cost of living and the

PLEASE TURN TO
PAGE 9, COL 4

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad
1995
MST

Dr M: Motor show another attraction for resort island

□ FROM PAGE 1

rate of inflation are also very low in Malaysia, making it possible for wages to be kept relatively low without undermining the standard of living of the people."

On the motor show, Dr Mahathir said the event would be another major attraction for Langkawi as a major destination for visitors to Malaysia following the success of the biennial Lima exhibition which will be held for the third time this year from Dec 5 to 10.

"After Lima, this motor show is the biggest event for Langkawi and will surely put Langkawi on the world map of motor shows."

Dr Mahathir said Limos '95 would fill a gap in the itinerary of events that was being planned for Langkawi as part of the Government's effort to make the island a major conference, convention and exhibition centre in the region.

The show will also enhance Langkawi's already established status as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region.

Dr Mahathir stressed on the importance of exhibitions as one of the most effective ways of promoting products or events.

"They bring together ex-

hibitors and the potential buyers in a most intimate atmosphere so that exhibitors and their prospective clients will get the maximum exposure to each other and to the products.

"Indeed exhibitions are now an essential component of trade and commerce. Lima shows have done this and the Langkawi International Motor Show will certainly do the same for the automotive industry," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir hopes Limos '95 will create waves in the automotive industry as exhibitors showcase their best available products and services, including their latest models and concept vehicles.

The show also features the supporting industries — spin-offs of the main industry — consisting of the tyre manufacturers, accessories like rims, seats, car hi-fi and manufacturers of certain components and many others.

The Prime Minister welcomed manufacturers participating in Limos '95 to look into the potential of the Malaysian or Southeast Asian automobile market.

"They are welcome to look into the potential even if it is just to market their special makes in the

rich markets of Southeast Asia.

"You will discover that in Malaysia, despite high taxes, every make and model are to be seen on the road," he said.

"Makers of high-priced cars have often expressed surprise that despite local prices being almost three times the prices in Europe, these luxury cars are quite common on the streets of Malaysia.

"That is the measure of Malaysians' love for cars and their willingness to pay for what they like."

The Prime Minister expressed confidence that the motor show, like Lima, would grow in strength from time to time.

Dr Mahathir hopes the event will be a success and will take Malaysia into the next millennium with more confidence and pride.

He also hopes the Malaysian automotive industry growth, despite being new in the industry compared to those of Europe, America and North-East Asia, can benefit from all the exhibits brought together at the exhibition.

He said the show provided the Malaysian auto industry an opportunity to display the tremendous progress that it had achieved in the

industry.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was given a traditional welcome on his arrival at the exhibition hall for the colourful opening ceremony.

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar.

Later, speaking at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied with the turnout of participants for the show and the interest it generated.

"I think it is quite a good show with lots of participants.

"The hotels are fully booked."

Asked what he would suggest to make the show bigger in future, especially in terms of participation from major manufacturers, he said the show was quite well represented.

"The big boys (of motor trade) are here and there is quite a good mix since motorcycles and vintage cars are also on display."

This fact, the Prime Minister added, proved that the show was different from the Tokyo International motorshow, which started today.

Limos was not meant to compete with Tokyo, Dr Mahathir said.