

18 APR 1996

FIRST BATCH OF 200 UNITS OF PROTON WIRA NOW IN CROATIA

By: Salbiah Said

ZAGREB, April 18 (Bernama) -- The first batch of 200 Proton Wira cars has already entered the Croatian market, says Proton Corporation Sdn Bhd's manager of international business, Norzahid Mohd Zahudi.

The first shipment marks Proton's entry into its 31st export market, said Norzahid who has been manning the Proton stand at the Malaysian Products Exhibition at the Zagreb fair here since Monday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today officially launched the exhibition which started on Monday.

Dr Mahathir, now on a one-day official visit to Croatia, is accompanied by wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali. Also in the official entourage is the minister of international trade and industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Hicom Bhd chairman Datuk Seri Yahaya Ahmad welcomed Dr Mahathir and members of the official delegation to the Proton show.

The Proton cars, which are currently being offered in Western Europe such as France, Germany and Belgium, are being distributed in Croatia by Niva Petrol, part of the Niva Group founded by Nikica Valentec, a former Prime Minister of Croatia.

The Niva Group was founded in 1995 and has a network of subsidiaries in Croatia, Europe and Asia.

Proton, Norzahid said, expected to sell 500 units for 1996 and 800 units next year in Croatia.

Proton Wiras, he said, had been offered in Europe since the beginning of 1995 and this additional market would enable inter-country transfers to take place.

The Proton Wira range comprises the 1.5 GLSi and 1.6 GLXi, and comes in manual and automatic transmissions. The models come with the four or five-door versions and in eight colours.

Proton cars, he said, had been enjoying strong sales in Europe and was particularly a top-selling make in the United Kingdom.

Proton expects to export up to 30,000 units for the 1996/97 sales period. It exported 116,595 units between 1986 and February 1996, which is its 11th year of production.

Proton cars began rolling out from the assembly lines in Shah Alam, Selangor, in 1985. -- BERNAMA

SS SHY