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Mahathir-Proton

MAHANTHIR LAUNCHES SALE OF PROTON WIRA IN VIETNAM

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

HO CHI MINH CITY, March 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the sale of the Proton Wira 1.6GLi model in Vietnam -- the first batch of Proton cars to be assembled outside Malaysia.

Proton's associate company, Vina Star Stars Motor Corporation (Vinastar), plans to produce 200 units of the car this year and the number will be increased to 360 units next year.

The left-hand drive Proton Wira is retailed at the government-approved price of US\$29,090, competitively positioned against Japanese makes, mainly Toyota, Mazda and Honda.

Among the estimated 300 guests present were the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, Vice-Chairman of the Peoples Committee Ho Chi Minh City, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Perlis Menteri Besar Shahidan Kassim and other members of the PM's delegation.

Speaking at the launch, Proton Chairman Datuk Seri Yahaya Ahmad said Vietnam is the 30th export market for Proton cars and the first overseas manufacturing activity for Proton Malaysia.

He said as of December 1995, Proton had exported 115,126 units with the United Kingdom being the largest at 85,734 units.

Vinastar, a joint venture company equally owned by Proton, Vietnamese state-owned Tracimexco, Mitsubishi Motor Corporation and Mitsubishi Corporation, has appointed 11 dealers and service networks throughout Vietnam to promote, market and provide aftersales facilities for Proton cars.

Vinastar General Director Shuroku Atahari said he was confident that with Mitsubishi technology, Proton's experiences of localisation and skillfulness of the Vietnamese people, Proton Wira and other vehicles being assembled by the company -- Mitsubishi L300 and Canter -- were the best choice in the local market.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir inaugurated the Malaysia-Vietnam Glass Ltd (MVGL) factory here, one of the first joint venture projects between Vietnam and Malaysia.

Speaking at the occasion, the prime minister said with an invested capital of US\$25 million, MVGL was the largest and most modern glass factory in Vietnam.

The project provides employment for 500 people who were trained at the Malaya Glass plant in Johor.

He said the proposal by Malaya Glass to invest in a second glass factory in Vietnam, in Hanoi, clearly reflected the confidence of the Malaysian companies and investors in Vietnam and its economic potential.

Before leaving for home, Dr Mahathir attended a briefing on the Phu Tho Sports and City Centre Project to be developed by another Malaysian company, Usaha Tegas Sdn Bhd. -- Bernama

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