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NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE TO BE SOLD FROM SEPTEMBER

By: M. Jegathesan

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- It started with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's dream to produce a national car. That was in 1982.

Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia or Hicom and Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd (Proton) were then established. This later saw the birth of the national car in 1985.

And now it's the national motorcycle. The first units of the national motorcycle will roll out in September.

The initial production capacity target of the 4-stroke model is 100,000 units per year.

The national motorcycle is expected to be very competitively priced. Malaysians would have an opportunity to view the national motorcycle "live" on TV as 70 units would be exhibited during the National Day Celebrations in Kota Kinabalu.

On Feb 7, 1995, Diversified Resources Bhd (DRB), Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd and Nisho-Iwai Corporation signed an MOU to initiate development of Malaysia's very first motorcycle.

A joint venture company "Motosikal dan Enjin Nasional Sdn Bhd" or Modenas was established. Khazanah Holdings, the government investment arm, has entered into this alliance.

Constituting a technological-driven, export-oriented RM300 million investment programme, Modenas would employ a total of 800 plant managers, engineers, supervisors and operators to produce 100,000 units annually when running at full capacity.

Construction of the production facility in Gurun, near Sungai Petani, Kedah located next to the steel company, Perwaja, is now nearing completion.

Modenas has invested more than RM5 million on extensive training programmes for management and engineering personnel in Japan.

The first pilot units produced have been tested to the satisfaction of both Kawasaki and Modenas engineers. The bike is said to be comfortable to ride, easy to handle and very stable at high speeds.

Presently, components are obtained from three major sources -- CKD parts imported from Japan (primarily engine and transmission components), in-house manufactured parts and local vendor parts.

By the launch date, the national motorcycle would comprise 50 percent local content. "By 1997, local content is expected to increase to 70 percent." -- BERNAMA

JSM SHY