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Bigger and better

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AT THE END OF last year's Langkawi International Motor Show (LIMOS'96), deals worth several million ringgit were clinched within the show's eight-day period. The response for some was so overwhelming that there were exhibitors who accepted bookings which set delivery dates to customers back between one and three years.

If this is any measure of success, then it makes participating in such events very profitable for automobile manufacturers, dealers and agents for auto accessories or auto-related products. Some manufacturers also took the opportunity to introduce models yet to be seen in this region. Organisers and exhibitors of such events have a big role to play in the industry. The demand is always for them to put up a good show, but this means spending a considerable amount to decorate the booths, and to pay rental for space and transportation charges and related overheads. Some of the exhibitors at LIMOS '96 last year spent up to RM500,000 to participate.

The official view on the worth of LIMOS '96 however is of guarded optimism. Being the second one to be held on the island, it is only natural that the organisers are on a learning curve. This optimism is shared by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who expressed confidence that LIMOS would grow and generate similar interest like the biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibition which has become internationally renowned.

LIMOS '96 attracted just over 70,000 visitors. Among those who enjoyed good business at LIMOS '96 were the Naza Group of Companies which had on display a wide range of cars and superbikes. It topped the list of lucrative sales selling some 85 units of cars.

Enai Automotive Industries Sdn Bhd, which introduced three new models of the American Cadillac, sold 27 units. 'We are pleasantly surprised with the tremendous response from visitors. Plans are in the pipeline to stage another launch of Cadillac cars in Kuala Lumpur in March,' said the company's marketing executive Segar Krishnan. Auto Concessionaire Sdn Bhd, which unveiled the latest Porsche Boxster, sold its import quota of 25 units. Those who intend to buy the car now will have to wait until 1998. AMIM Holdings Sdn Bhd, meanwhile, recorded 150 inquiries from potential buyers for its Ford Transit and Courier.

And the list goes on: MBF-Peugeot sold 25 units of its 306, 406 and two-door convertible series, Torino Motor Industries sold three Fiat Barchetta roadsters, Edaran Oto Indah Sdn Bhd had 12 bookings for its Rover cars, Cempaka Utara Sdn Bhd sold 20 Opel cars and Land Rover Malaysia Sdn Bhd sold three units.

'We participated not with the intention of selling our cars but to promote our image as a second-hand dealer for luxury sports cars,' said one Bumiputera exhibitor who participated in Limos 95 and 96. 'I look at it as a duty to support the motorshow, regardless of whether it is held in Kuala Lumpur or Langkawi, because such a show was designed with the objective of promoting Malaysia as a hub for automotive industry in Southeast Asia.'

LIMOS '96 organiser, Le Proton Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd, succeeded in attracting a larger pool of exhibitors in what is only its second show. It was a bigger and more lively motorshow compared to that of the previous year. They were able to pull in big names like Porsche, Cadillac, Lotus

and Mercedes Benz, who used the motorshow to launch their new models into the Southeast Asian market.

Le Proton has already established LIMA internationally, so much so that some foreign visitors who attend the airshow tend to identify Malaysia with Langkawi and not the other way around.

Le Proton's executive chairman Datuk Mohd Radzi Manan believes LIMOS will help enhance the development of Malaysia's automotive industry. He had wanted to expand LIMOS '96's coverage to include the automotive component sector. Hopefully, more such exhibitors will participate next time.

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