

28/04/1997

Chimaera Malaysia's pride

Pratap Parameswaran

THE TVR Chimaera holds supremacy than any other sports car models in the Malaysian market. As almost 50 per cent of its components, including the body, chassis, seats and the interior trims, is manufactured locally, the car is indeed Malaysia's pride.

The company responsible for "localising" the car is TVR Sports (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, which will also produce other TVR models at a later stage.

Director of TVR Sports (Malaysia) Datuk Yong Poh Kon, said the company plans to increase the production volume to 20 units a month by the end of the year.

The RM20 million factory in Port Klang currently manufactures about 10 cars a month and has a full production capacity of 500 units a year. "We have to sell at least 25 units a month to make profit," he said.

About 60 per cent of total production is for the export market, of which the UK is the main target. Nearly 4,000 cars have been sold in the UK alone since the launch of the Chimaera there five years ago.

Domestically, the car is to be marketed by the factory itself and buyers have the advantage of visiting the factory to see the progress of their individual hand-crafted car. Each car takes about three months to complete.

The Chimaera is different from conventional cars as it is constructed with a lightweight composite body mounted on a rigid tubular space frame chassis.

The company produces both the 4.0 litre and 5.0 litre variants of the Chimaera.

The Chimaera 500 series can make a 0-60 mph dash in 4.4 seconds whereas the 400 series is also able to do it under 5 seconds.

The on-the-road price (without insurance) for the Chimaera 400 series stands at RM238,000 depending on the options selected. Prices are however to be adjusted upwards after the introductory period in conjunction with the launch.

Carving out a niche for itself in the high performance sports cars category, the Chimaera comes fully handcrafted.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed his satisfaction for the quality and high performance of the car at a launching ceremony on Saturday.

Expressing pride with the car as one that is actually built in Malaysia rather than assembled here, the Prime Minister said the Chimaera was "up to standard" and one that fulfilled the needs and condition of a sports car in terms of road handling and furnishing.

The company is also embarking on a vendor development programme, starting with 10 selected parts and components manufacturers to be nurtured as future suppliers.

It was appointed by TVR Engineering Ltd (UK) as their overseas manufacturer and distributor to produce the sports car and market it in the Asia Pacific region. TVR (UK) holds a 10 per cent stake in the local operations.

According to Dr Mahathir, the Chimaera gives Malaysia the opportunity to learn about engineering not only in the vehicle industry but engineering as a whole.

With the inclusion of this sensation into the Malaysian environment, the

country too - as it goes without saying - notched another success in automotive technology.

After Proton and Lotus, TVR Chimaera has further manifested Malaysia's capability.

(END)