

27/04/1997

Dr Mahathir: We have to chase technology

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SHAH ALAM, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it was up to Malaysians to "chase after technology" and not just wait for its transfer in order to leap-frog ahead in every direction.

The Prime Minister said it was up to Malaysians to either wait for a technology transfer or move ahead by acquiring the technology.

"There may be certain quarters who might be reluctant to transfer technology to us," he said. "Then it is up to Malaysians to chase after technology."

"We have to do this to enhance our capabilities," he told a Press conference after launching the two-seater, handcrafted high-performance sportscar TVR Chimaera at the Shah Alam Racing Circuit.

Another milestone in Malaysia's automobile industry, the two-seater TVR Chimaera - manufactured by TVR Sports (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd - is different from conventional cars as it is constructed with a lightweight but strong composite body mounted on a rigid tubular spaceframe chassis.

The TVR Chimaera sells for between RM238,000 (non-metallic) and RM240,000 (metallic) for the 4-litre class and RM264,360 (non-metallic) and RM266,360 (metallic) for the 5-litre class.

After the launch, Dr Mahathir was first driven for two laps around the circuit by Formula-1 driver Alexander Yoong before the Prime Minister took over the wheels and had the crowd transfixed as he drove at high speed for two laps.

Describing the TVR Chimaera's technology, Dr Mahathir said although the market for these vehicles were limited, it provided the opportunity to improve and adapt its design and structure of its body and engine to suit local conditions.

"This provides us the opportunity to enhance our capabilities in engineering, design and structure," he said. "There is a bright future for our engineering and sports car industries."

Displaying an astute knowledge on the TVR Chimaera's specifications, Dr Mahathir said it was a full-size sports car as compared to the Lotus.

In terms of finishing, driver comfort, upholstery and road-holding, it was more than up-to-standard for a sports car.

"Furthermore, it is truly a built-in-Malaysia sports car," he said, "and has met the conditions set out for sports cars."

Dr Mahathir said the engine was also upgraded in Malaysia with the chassis, body works and upholstery done here.

"I am very pleased with the achievement," he said. "I am also glad that not many of the car components are imported."

As for the car's fibre-glass body, he said it needed high quality work by hand.

To a question on his earlier remark that that were several false starts in the production of a local sports car, Dr Mahathir said there were plans to produce the sports car earlier but it did not materialise.

"There are people who brought in sports cars from Britain," he said, "but they are old ones."

"I hope such things would not happen again," he said.

"We want genuine sports cars to be built here in Malaysia," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said the country had rapidly progressed from being a total unknown 12 years ago to emerge as a producer of quality cars that met the standards of developed countries.

He said Malaysia had successfully designed and produced cars of international standard and was now venturing into the production of sports cars.

Despite the false starts, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians have persisted to produce the TVR Chimaera.

He reminded Malaysians to always instil the "we think we can" or Malaysia Boleh spirit in their endeavour.

"The people must have self-confidence," he said, "and also the capability to acquire knowledge to perform well and improve over time."

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