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Local sports car launched

SHAH ALAM, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's dream to build a sports car was realised today as the Malaysian-made TVR Chimaera was unveiled at the Shah Alam Racing Circuit.

Undertaken by the TVR Sports (M) Sdn Bhd, the sports car comes in four- and five-litre engines.

Prior to the launch of the car by Dr Mahathir, TVR Sports chairman Datuk Razali Abdul Rahman said the idea of the car was mooted by Dr Mahathir during a discussion some years ago.

With the automotive industry in the country well established, he said the time was right for the company - exclusively appointed by TVR Engineering Ltd UK - to become the overseas manufacturer and distributor of the TVR Chimaera and market it in the Asia-Pacific region.

Also present were chief executive officer of the company Peter Tan, directors Datuk Yong Poh Kon and Ti Teow Yong, and TVR representative John Kent.

Referring to the handcrafted TVR Chimaera, he said it was not about importing massive equipment, completely knock-down units, assemble and then call the result Malaysian-made.

"This is about a car made by Malaysian hands," he said. "To do this, one must have intimate knowledge of the process, its engineering and the finer details.

"The transfer of technology has to be complete, high standards of workmanship vital."

Razali said right from the start, TVRM manufactured 50 per cent of the car in-house, including the chassis, the body, seats and interior trims.

The company, he said, was embarking on a vendor development programme, starting with 10 selected parts and components manufacturers who will be nurtured as future suppliers.

Once the programme matures, TVR will export components to its UK partner.

"We intend to achieve over 70 per cent locally manufactured component parts by 1999," he said.

On the name Chimaera, Razali said it alluded to the fire-breathing beast in Greek mythology capable of mysterious powers.

With 340-horsepower in an all-alloy V8 engine, the car can make a 0-100kph dash in under five seconds. The body is made from composite materials, reducing its overall weight while maintaining strength.

The frame was developed from extensive experience with Tuscan racing cars and tested under severe conditions.

"This is a world-class sports car that we can be proud of," Razali said.

"Surely, Malaysia has moved another notch up the technology ladder to be able to produce such a car."

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