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MTB AIMS TO TAP 50 PCT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES MARKET SHARE

By: Leslean Arshad

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Truck & Bus Sdn Bhd (MTB), the manufacturer of national truck, HICOM Perkasa which was launched here today, aims to tap half of the market share of commercial vehicles in its first year of operation.

MTB, a company in the DRB-HICOM conglomerate, will focus on producing the light-duty trucks commercial vehicles which had more opportunity to capture the market of trucks below five tonnes (de Controlled), said managing director Datuk Hamzah Ahmad.

"We are aiming very high...we will not be satisfied with less than 50 percent in the first year itself," he said.

Hamzah said this to reporters during a media tour recently to MTB plant at the Peramu Jaya Industrial Area in Pekan, Pahang prior to the launching of the truck.

The national truck was launched by prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Putera World Trade Centre.

"In business, we must be ambitious and what is most important is to work hard to achieve an objective," Hamzah said when asked how the company intended to tap a "big market share" within a short time.

The on the road prices for the various models are: MTB 140 at RM44,959.08, MTB 150T at RM53,934.23 and MTB 150DX at RM59,843.43.

Hamzah said under the five tonnes truck segment, "buyers do not need to seek for permits to be on the road, and this is an advantage... the trucks can be sold like hot fried bananas."

From 0.8 million commercial vehicles on the road, 60 percent is under the de Controlled commercial usage segment.

MTB produces 2,700 units of commercial vehicles monthly in its first year of operation beginning July this year, and about 60 percent comprises the national trucks.

It produces between 1,400 to 2,000 units of the national trucks monthly and these figures are expected to be maintained next year, Hamzah said, adding that MTB aims to produce 70,000 units of national trucks in five years.

He also noted that such "convenient" trucks would be suitable for small entrepreneurs, besides supporting the development of small and medium scale industries in the country.

DRB (Diversified Resources Bhd), HICOM Holdings Bhd and Isuzu Motors Limited signed an agreement for the manufacture of the national truck on May 14 last year.

DRB and HICOM each has 40 percent stake in MTB while technical partner, Isuzu, has 20 percent interest.

Hamzah said MTB has invested RM300 million on its 104 acres plant (41.6ha), which included expansion programme, adding that MTB's plant also deals in contract assembly of commercial vehicles, military trucks, four wheel drives and vans including Mitsubishi, Iveco, Ssangyong and Isuzu.

Currently, the plant is assembling 17 models and 65 variants. In the pipeline is the assembly of Indian-based Tata truck, late next year.

Hamzah, when asked if Isuzu will phase-out its trucks from the local scene, said Isuzu will do so once the national trucks are established in the market.

"Isuzu will stop bringing in their trucks. Instead we have the national truck," he said, adding that the phasing-out exercise is based on Isuzu

long-time relations with the conglomerate.

Of the truck market, Isuzu controlled 50 percent of the five tonnes truck and 70 percent of the seven tonnes.

As part of its expansion programme, MTB will export 25 percent of its total production to countries in the Asia Pacific, and is eyeing six countries in the region.

He also did not rule out the possibility of using the Proton networking for its marketing.

HICOM Perkasa will be marketed by Automotive Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd (ACM) in the peninsula and Kinabalu Motor Assembler for Sabah and Sarawak. ACM has 67 vendors to market the trucks. -- BERNAMA

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