

10/11/1998

Dr M praises 15 who developed engine

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today commended 15 Malaysian automobile engineers from Petronas for developing a high-performance engine in less than two years.

"This is no mean feat. It is a testimony of the capability of Malaysian engineers to learn, absorb and adopt new technologies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this in the souvenir programme at the launch of Petronas' 2000 engine tonight.

He congratulated Petronas for taking the initiative to spearhead the design and development of Malaysia's first prototype automotive engine, an area which he said was new to Malaysians.

"This commercial engine development project represents a significant milestone for Malaysia in its quest to play a meaningful role in the automotive industry and become an industrialised nation in line with Vision 2020," he said.

The two-litre prototype was developed based on Formula One technology at Sauber Petronas Engineering's facility in Hinwil, Switzerland.

SPE is a 40:60 joint venture between Petronas and Red Bull Sauber Holding.

Dr Mahathir said with the creation of the prototype engine, Malaysia would be moving a step closer to developing a competitive automotive industry in the country.

He said Malaysia had successfully manufactured its own cars.

"Although a high percentage of the components used in the production of Proton cars are locally made, one of the crucial components, the engine, is still imported.

"Now that we have started designing and constructing engines, we are ready to move forward into the development and manufacture of commercial engines," he said.

Earlier, Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, who represented the Prime Minister, launched the new engine at a ceremony held here tonight.

Also present were Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin, its president and chief executive Tan Sri Hassan Marican and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Halim Ali.

In his speech, Azizan said the project to produce a commercial engine was Petronas' own.

"It is an attempt to fill a gap in our automotive industry.

"More important, it has made available a core group of engineers with the knowledge and skill to design and develop engines," he said.

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