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Kembara shows economic situation not as bad as claimed: PM

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THE launch yesterday of the first Malaysian-made four-wheel drive car, Perodua Kembara, shows that the country's economy is not in as bad a shape as the foreign media have made it out to be, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

"Malaysia is said to be facing an economic crisis... and nothing (in the view of some foreigners) can be done to salvage the economy," he said at the unveiling of the new car and Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua's company logo in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Contrary to claims that Malaysia is doing all the wrong things in its effort to revitalise the economy, the country is still able to launch a new vehicle, Dr Mahathir said to the applause of about 1,000 guests at the event.

In fact, the foreign journalists "seem to know much more about running countries, better than any Government in the world," he added.

Likening them to spectators at a football match, Dr Mahathir said those not actually involved always think they know best.

"They think they know what to do. Strangely, they remain journalists and not ministers of any country", he said.

The confirmed bookings for 475 units of the Kembara go to show that Malaysians "still have two or three ringgit to spend on new cars," the Prime Minister said, adding that he is confident the new car will be well-received by the public as it is the cheapest in its category.

He noted that the aerodynamic shape and its competitive pricing are bound to see the Malaysian-made 4x4 outselling the "boxy" four-wheel-drive vehicles currently in the market.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that the Kembara will eventually hit the export market in a big way, so that Perodua can build on the current sale of its Kancil variants in countries such as Singapore, Mauritius and Brunei.

He said Kembara will also assist the Perodua, which now has a new logo, to embark on a more aggressive marketing strategy to strengthen Perodua's foothold in the industry, locally and overseas.

Kembara comes in three variants, the EX, GX and EZ, with on the road prices ranging from RM45,898.00 to RM52,276.19.

At the event, Dr Mahathir also witnessed the presentation of the ISO 9001 certificate to Perodua by Britain's Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA). The VCA was represented by its chief executive officer Derek Harvey and Perodua its managing director Datuk Abdul Rahman Omar. Also present was Perodua chairman Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badiozaman.

Perodua won the international accreditation for its design and exterior trim parts and accessories. The certificate is the first to be awarded to a passenger car and utility vehicle manufacturer in the country.

VCA, one of the internationally recognised certification agencies for the automotive industry had earlier this year awarded the ISO 9002 certification to Perodua for the manufacture and sale of passenger cars and utility vans, endorsing processes like press and body fabrication, painting, casting and machining of engine parts, engine transmission assembly and vehicle assembly.

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