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AUTOGUARD-VEHICLE

AUTOGUARD GEARS FOR A LARGER MARKET SHARE

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, May 18 (Bernama) -- Autoguard, Malaysia's first locally made vehicle immobiliser, an anti-theft system using the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology from US, is all set to capture a sizeable share of both the local and international market.

Advanced Interconnection Technologies Sdn Bhd, the developer and manufacturer of Autogard, is confident that the company's pioneering status would give it the edge in capturing a larger market share.

K.Ramanathan, managing director of Top Autoguard Security Sdn Bhd (Tags), the marketing arm for Autoguard, said that since its soft launch a few months back the product has already been successfully exported to markets in Cambodia, India, Singapore, the Middle East and the United States.

The current export figure of 30,000 units is expected to reach 50,000 by end of the year, he told Bernama after the official launch of Autoguard by Science, Technology and Environment Minister, Datuk Law Hieng Ding here yesterday.

The company also plans to penetrate markets in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa and some European countries in about one year with an initial export of 50,000 units, he said.

"Currently we are negotiating with Bangladesh for an initial export of 5,000 units and are confident of reaching a deal within the next three months," he said.

"We are confident the product will be successful in these countries," Ramanathan said.

He said since the soft launching, about 1,500 units have also been sold locally, adding that the company hoped to push another 30,000 units by end of the year.

He said that Autoguard, priced between RM478 and RM578 per unit, was also competitive compared with imported car-theft systems as most of them are priced at an average of RM1,000.

He said the company was aiming to get five percent of the local anti-car theft systems market by 2000.

He said the company was also approaching local car producers like Proton and Perodua to market Autoguard.

"We are eyeing the factory fitted car market," he said.

On product investment, Ramanathan said to-date some RM6.5 million had been invested, including RM2 million for research and development.

He said another RM10 million would also be invested in the next three years on R&D, product improvement as well as new products.

He said the company was also currently in the process of creating a similar system for lorries, buses, motorcycles and heavy vehicles. The product is expected to be in the market in six months to one year's time, he said.

He said the company was also seeking the government's assistance and grants under the Industrial Grant Scheme and the Commercialisation Research and Development Fund, for the new products.

On Autoguard, Ramanathan said its launch was timely as car theft in the country has been increasing.

He said the product was also in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for local companies to be more daring into taking

the risks in developing new products and investing in R&D, for export level products.

Tags and Advanced Interconnection Technologies are both wholly-owned subsidiaries of Subra Metal Holdings Sdn Bhd, a company which started with the scrap metal and plastic trading business 15 years ago.

Today, Subra Metal Holdings which has diversified into recycling of metals and plastics, has a steady export market for its products.

At the launch of Autoguard, Law had commended the company's venture into the product, saying that it was proof that Malaysian companies were prepared to make huge investments in R&D as well as in plants and machinery.

"This spirit and confidence shown by Tags should be emulated by other companies in promoting Malaysian made products overseas," he said. --

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