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Jaguh hits the road in big, stylish way

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GURUN: The Modenas Jaguh is a motorcycle that embraces the trends of three eras - the rebel 50s, the easy riding 60s and 70s, and the cruising 90s.

The second national motorcycle, launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, is a sleek 175cc, four-stroke engine cruiser type with an on-the-road price tag of RM7,500.

It has an appealing element for post-war folks who experienced Merdeka, youths who were the rage during Flower Power and the youngsters growing up now in the Internet age.

The first 1,000 customers will enjoy an introductory price of RM6,998 and a 30 per cent discount on accessories.

The first 1,000 units, some of them flagged off by Dr Mahathir yesterday when he launched it, are available at most of Modenas' major distributors.

Two teams, 10 on each side with one scouring the north and the other the south, have embarked on a roadshow to introduce the new model.

The motorcycle, introduced after an extensive market research, is a stepping-stone model to production of bigger engine capacity motorcycles in the future.

Edaran Modenas Sdn Bhd, Modenas's wholly-owned distribution company, expects to sell 12,000 units within the first year and 20,000 units the following year.

Jaguh will also be exported by the end of the year.

Commending Modenas on its success, Dr Mahathir said he was proud that the manufacturer was capable of producing its second model within 30 months of launching its first, the Kriss 110.

This, he said, was possible because of the Malaysia Boleh spirit that the Malaysian workforce possessed.

"The workers assembled 110cc motorcyces, now they are assembling 175cc motorcyces ... no problem," he said to the cheers and applause from Modenas workers witnessing the launching ceremony at the Modenas plant's sports complex.

"Today, one motorcycle can be assembled every six minutes."

Dr Mahathir readily admitted that Malaysia was not shy to ask from others to learn new technical skills.

He said once the skills were acquired, Malaysians made the best skilled workers.

Citing computer technology as an example, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians' expertise in programming equalled that of the Europeans and Japanese.

Dr Mahathir, who believes Modenas would produce its millionth motorcyle, said the Government encouraged the company to export its motorcyces so that it could mass-produce and bring down the prices.

Modenas has exported 12,000 units of Kriss worth RM40 million until the end of last year.

Earlier, Modenas chairman Tan Sri Mohd Saleh Sulong said Modenas had targeted 25,000 units worth RM100 million this year for export.

Among the new overseas markets are Bangladesh, Ecuador, Brazil, China, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

Currently, the Kriss is exported to Cambodia, Greece, South Africa, Vietnam, Iran, Turkey, Argentina, Malta, Egypt, Brunei and Sri Lanka.

"Kriss' ability to enter the international market showed that these motorcyces produced in Malaysia are world class," he said.

Saleh said although the economic downturn affected local component

production, the programme would achieve 90 per cent by 2001 and 95 per cent in 2002.

"We manufacture high-technology components like crankshafts and camshafts," he said.

"We will spend another RM12,000 to manufacture cyclinder heads next year, making us the only motorcyle company in Malaysia which manufactures cyclinder heads."

As for the local market, sales, which now stand at 75,000, are expected to increase to 88,000 units this year.

In 1997, Kriss captured about 46 per cent of the four-stroke 100cc and above market segment but it dropped by 45 per cent last year due to heavy promotion and introduction of new models by the competitors.

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