

28/07/1999

Sleek Jaguh revving up to cruise into world market

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

MALAYSIANS are proud that national motorcycle manufacturer Motosikal dan Enjin Nasional Sdn Bhd, has successfully introduced its second and latest model - Jaguh - to the market on July 19.

Even more proud are the Modenas workers as they have proven that Malaysians have acquired the technology for the sleek and stylish motorcycle to roll off its plant in Gurun, Kedah.

The 500-odd workers directly involved in production had diligently learned the skills on motorcycle-making and, within a short period, managed to use advanced technology to produce the two-wheeler.

Not only did the workers display the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit, Malaysians also displayed their support for the Government-initiated "Buy Malaysian" campaign when nearly 2,000 Jaguh were snapped up within a few days after the launch by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Modenas plant.

A top Modenas dealer from Penang, Chan Thean Lye, had no qualms about the capabilities of Jaguh when he confidently made the winning bid of RM55,000 for the specialised Jaguh 8 registration plate - marking the day the motorcycle was launched.

The registration number plates - Jaguh 1 to Jaguh 10 - have also been reserved.

With the first 1,000 units, tagged at the offer price of RM6,998, snapped up like hot cakes, Malaysians still find the RM7,500 on-the-road price very affordable.

The four-stroke 175cc cruiser-type Jaguh has a price advantage over the Japanese makes, especially when its nearest rivals are the 250cc four-stroke cruisers which cost twice as much.

It took two years for engineers from Modenas and Japanese motorcycle manufacturer Kawasaki to develop Jaguh which is in a class of its own both in terms of price and engine capacity.

This success is a stepping-stone for the national motorcycle manufacturer to produce bigger engine capacity motorcycles in the future.

The Prime Minister was all praise for Modenas and its workers, saying that he was proud that the manufacturer was capable of producing its second model within 30 months after launching its first model, the Kriss 110, which hit the market on June 14, 1996.

He said this was possible because of the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit that the Malaysian workforce possessed.

"The workers assembled 110cc motorcycles, now they are assembling 175cc motorcycles ... no problem... one motorcycle can be assembled every six minutes.

"I have visited the factory here, all work is done by our people. This is something to be proud of."

Addressing those present to witness the launching ceremony, Dr Mahathir reminded Malaysians that they could, if they had the confidence and discipline, to achieve whatever they aspired to do.

Malaysians, however, had proven this over and over again - the Malaysian workforce has the capabilities not only to learn, but also to acquire the skills within a short period.

This is something which is acknowledged by foreign investors and is one of the main factors that make Malaysia an attractive base for them to set up their manufacturing facilities.

Many invested millions of ringgit not once but twice and more because of their confidence in our workforce.

Like the Kriss, Jaguh is scheduled to be exported at the end of the year.

This means Modenas will increase its production volume which would bring down the price.

Modenas targeted 25,000 units worth RM100 million this year for exports to countries including Bangladesh, Ecuador, Brazil, China, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

The motorcycle is also likely to penetrate Modenas' present export markets, namely, Cambodia, Greece, South Africa, Vietnam, Iran, Turkey, Argentina, Malta, Egypt, Brunei and Sri Lanka.

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

So far, 75,000 Kriss have been sold locally, and this is expected to increase to 88,000 units this year with the introduction of Kriss II last April.

Besides providing job opportunities, Modenas' operations in Gurun has also brought about physical and economic changes to the once sleepy town and its surrounding areas.

State Executive Councillor and Gurun Assemblyman Datuk Beh Heng Seong said Modenas was one of the factors that had stimulated the growth of Gurun.

"The presence of two heavy industries in Gurun, Modenas and its immediate neighbour, Perwaja Steel, has spurred economic activities.

"The two facilities are catalysts which created spin-offs for various activities that benefited the people of Kedah, and Gurun in particular."

Modenas, like the national car-maker Proton which over the years had successfully produced several models of world-class quality, is the pride of all Malaysians.

Malaysians are confident that the national motorcycle-maker will make inroads overseas and its products will be at par with, if not better than, those of other popular motorcycle-makers in a very short time.

(END)