

06 NOV 2000
MAHATHIR-CAR
TD 2000 SPORTS CAR TO ENTER LOCAL MARKET

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 6 (Bernama) -- National car distributor Edaran Otomobil Nasional Bhd (EON) today signed an agreement with TD Cars (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd for the exclusive distributorship in Malaysia of the classic roadster sports car TD 2000.

EON chairman, Tan Sri Mohd Saleh Sulong, said the sale of the TD 2000 would not compete against the national car as it is targeting a rather selected niche market.

He said the classic roadster sports car was of a different kind and unlike cars manufactured presently by Proton Bhd.

"We are not looking at a big volume for the sales of the TD Cars but conservatively at 5-10 units per month," he said after the signing which was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office here today.

Signing on behalf of EON was Saleh and its managing director Datuk Adzmi Abdul Wahab while TD Cars was represented by its chairman Datuk (Dr) Jaffar Mohamed Ali and its managing director, Edward Teo.

The TD 2000 sports car is currently assembled by one of EON's wholly-owned subsidiaries, Automotive Conversion Engineering Sdn Bhd (ACE).

Eighty handbuilt TD 2000 sports cars have been assembled this year.

Saleh said that out of the 175 EON sales outlets, 52 sales branches and 18 sales dealerships have been appointed by EON to initially market the TD 2000 sports car.

He said the sole and exclusive distributorship agreement for the TD 2000 classic sports car would be for a five-year term with an option for a further five years.

Jaffar said TD Cars was eyeing to export its sports cars to Singapore, New Zealand, Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland and other Commonwealth countries.

He also said the sports car production is expected to increase from 80 units this year to 180 cars by the year 2001 and double that in the following year.

The TD 2000 now has a 50 percent local content and uses a Toyota Celica engine.

He also said the British were impressed with the car and hopefully it would be on the road in London.

Teo said TD Cars hopes to start exporting the TD 2000 to Singapore by this year and in the UK in the early part of next year.

At the same event, Dr Mahathir handed the keys to the very first and second owners of the TD 2000. They were Dr Shariffuddin Abdul Wahab and Datuk Dr Hamzah Abdul Rahman respectively.

The Prime Minister also took the car for a test-drive with Saleh at his side around the Putrajaya office complex.

Meanwhile, Saleh, who is also the chairman of DRB-Hicom Bhd, said that the sale of Hicom Holdings Bhd's 32 percent stake in EON to Proton looked like it was still at standstill at the moment.

Asked whether EON was happy to keep its car distribution operations and EON Bank Bhd, Saleh said: "Should there be any transactions, it has got to be on terms which are mutually beneficial to both parties. If we are to sell, then the whole of EON will have to go." -- BERNAMA

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