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Local organisers can take a leaf from Tokyo motor show's book

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LOOK East - that's one of the policies promoted by the Prime Minister soon after he took office. Visit Japan and you'll understand why Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wanted us to pick up the good qualities found in the Land of the Rising Sun.

I was there earlier this week as a guest of DRB-Hicom Bhd, one of the country's top corporations. Despite selling its stake in Proton to Petronas, DRB-Hicom is still an active player in the industry through its other subsidiaries and tie-ups with other top Japanese car makers.

With several motoring journalists, I was part of the company's Malaysian entourage to the Tokyo International Motor Show. And what a show it was.

We've had our own motor shows, including the ones held in 1995 and 1996 in Langkawi. They were organised by the same people who ran the Langkawi air show but it did not go beyond two events. Known as the Langkawi International Motor Show, the shows were to have been a catalyst for more economic activities in Langkawi.

There were other motor shows in Kuala Lumpur too, and by other organisers. These shows were held at several locations, including at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur and the Mines Exhibition Centre in Sri Kembangan. These shows were well attended and popular among the motoring public.

But these shows should not be compared with the one held in Tokyo. I'm told the Frankfurt Motor Show is just as big and exciting. The Langkawi and Kuala Lumpur shows were not in the same league, but to be fair, they were held for different reasons and for a different audience.

But local organisers could pick up useful tips from the shows held abroad. The Tokyo organisers are very experienced and have the expertise to make their show one that everyone in the automotive industry dare not miss.

The organisers had taken every step to make their show a success. This was apparent from the moment one neared the venue. First, there were many guides to help visitors. I joined the world's motoring Press on the first Press Day.

Two days were allotted to the media to get a preview of what was in store. Pressmen got their accreditation quite easily as there were counters for local and foreign media representatives.

The organisers, knowing that there would be a large contingent of the motoring Press, made certain of adequate facilities. There were platforms for Press photographers to do their job. Television crews, too, were given assistance.

In all motor shows exhibitors distribute kits containing pictures, brochures and Press releases to journalists. At the Tokyo show, the organisers made arrangements for these documents to be sent back home by courier, FOC (free of charge).

Michelin, the giant French tyre manufacturer, had entered into a deal with courier company DHL to help the journalists. Mind you, the documents were already in my office, having arrived ahead of me. If this wasn't done, many journalists would have dumped some of the documents and brochures into the bin instead.

The other days were for the trade visitors and the public. Schoolchildren were offered a discount on the entrance fee. This meant that the organisers gave much thought to the young people - after all,

they are going to inherit the industry and it was logical to get them interested from a tender age.

When the Japanese organise events, they don't take chances. They make sure everything is done - including arranging for a proper goodbye as the tour coach leaves the place you visited.