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Perodua rolls out 500,000th vehicle

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RAWANG, Sat. - The rolling out of the 500,000th vehicle made by Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) was officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at its plant in Sungai Choh today.

By a coincidence, the vehicle that made the half million mark was Perodua's latest offering, the Kelisa, which will be officially launched on Aug 24.

During his tour of the plant, Dr Mahathir conducted the final five-point check for the car and signed and sealed its inspection certificate.

Perodua managing director Datuk Ab Rahman Omar later presented the car to Dr Mahathir as a gift, which bore the registration Perodua 2001.

The car, fitted with a 1,000cc, 12-valve DOHC fuel injection engine, is tentatively priced between RM36,000 and RM39,000.

It is based on the Daihatsu Mira platform with modifications to the front and rear parts.

Bookings for the car, which comes in the EX, GX and EZ variants, can be made at all Perodua dealers from Monday.

Kelisa, which is named after the popular fish also known as the Arrowana or Gold Dragon, is the fifth model in the Perodua stable after the Kancil, Rusa, Kembara and Kenari.

Dr Mahathir also officially opened Perodua's second cylinder head machining line, which is fully automated and able to provide an additional capacity of 70,000 units per annum compared to 60,000 units for the first line.

He also had a look at the company's concept prototype, which is a cross over of the Mini and Multi-purpose vehicle body styles, with futuristic designs and features.

At a Press conference, the Prime Minister said he was impressed with Perodua's achievements within seven years of producing its first car in 1994.

"Production is now all automated ... engine production is all Malaysian, except for the transmission," Dr Mahathir added.

He said Perodua's success, including in the field of Research and Development, clearly proved that Malaysians have the potential to grasp new technologies within a relatively short span.

On the Kelisa, Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that it would be popular among Malaysians due to its attractive design.

Asked about Perodua's local shareholders equity interest negotiations with its two Japanese owners, he said foreign stake was now seen as necessary.

This was because Perodua would have to be a more cost-effective manufacturer when the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta) Agreement, with respect to the automotive industry, is implemented in 2005.

Perodua's local shareholders are UMW Corp Sdn Bhd (38 per cent), MBM Resources Bhd (20 per cent) and PNB Resources Corp Sdn Bhd (10 per cent) while its foreign owners are Mitsui Ltd (seven per cent) and Daihatsu Motor Co, which owns 25 per cent of Perodua including five per cent held through Daihatsu (M) Sdn Bhd.

Ab Rahman said about 3,000 to 4,000 units of the Kelisa would be manufactured a month, and was confident of selling that many units in the same period.

He said with the new addition, Perodua hopes to capture at least 30 per

cent of the local automobile market compared to 28 per cent at present.