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Mahathir-Daimler

DAIMLERCHRYSLER KEEN TO COOPERATE WITH PROTON

STUTTGART, March 17 (Bernama) -- One of the world's biggest car manufacturers, DaimlerChrysler is very keen to work closely with the Malaysian national car manufacturer, Proton.

This intention was stated by its top official, Dr Manfred Bischoff when briefing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who visited the Mercedes Benz plant at Sindelfingen, near here.

The Prime Minister is now in Germany for an official visit beginning tomorrow in Munich. Dr Mahathir will be in Germany for five days. Besides Stuttgart and Munich, Dr Mahathir will also visit Dusseldorf and Berlin.

According to Dr Bischoff, who is a member of the DaimlerChrysler Board of Management, Corporate Strategy, his company was confident that the cooperation would give Proton an edge to enter the world market.

It is learnt that DaimlerChrysler owns 37 per cent interest in Mitsubishi which works closely with Proton in manufacturing the national car. DaimlerChrysler is keen to establish the relationship through Mitsubishi.

Dr Bischoff said it was the trend in the world's motor industry for the largest car manufacturers to establish an alliance with local manufacturers.

Their factories worldwide would also produce components for the local cars and this would save production cost besides enhancing production and competitiveness in terms of cost, he said.

Also present at the briefing were Malaysian ambassador to Germany Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohd Deen and Datuk Haji Mohamad Haji Hassan, managing director of Cycle & Carriage Bintang Berhad, the distributing agent for Mercedes Benz cars in Malaysia.

While at the plant, Dr Mahathir became the first prime minister in the world to see the latest and most expensive model of the DaimlerChrysler car, the Maybach, that had yet to be displayed to the public.

The car had sophisticated features such as the rear passenger seat that can be reclined like the first class seat of an aeroplane and its price had yet to be decided but would cost several million ringgit each in Malaysia.

According to Maybach Project head, Prof Hermann Gaus, only about 1,000 units of the car would be produced each year to preserve its exclusiveness.

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