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PETRONAS-ENGINES

PETRONAS TO COMMERCIALY PRODUCE CAR ENGINES BY 2004, SAYS CHAIRMAN

By: Mohd Fisol Jaafar

HINWIL (SWITZERLAND), June 10 (Bernama) - National oil corporation Petronas plans to commercially produce automobile engines in Malaysia by 2004.

Petronas is currently negotiating with national car maker Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd (Proton) to consider using the 1.8 and 2.2 litre engines in at least one of its car models, Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin told the Malaysian media after accompanying Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on a tour of the Sauber Petronas Engineering AG (SPE) and Sauber Motorsports AG here today.

Dr Mahathir arrived in Zurich yesterday from Naples, Italy for his three-day official visit to Switzerland. It is also his first official visit to this European country.

SPE, in which Petronas has a 40 percent stake, has successfully developed a prototype 2.0 litre engine involving 15 Malaysian engineers. The prototype engine has undergone numerous tests and has been mounted on the Proton Waja, Satria and Perdana models.

Azizan said Petronas was now confident that it already has the capability and expertise to commercially produce the engines in Malaysia.

"It will be a high technology engine. It is a high performance, small and compact and meets the environmental standards, including the stringent European standards. A sporty and powerful engine," he said.

Azizan regarded the ability by Malaysians to produce an indigenous engine as a major milestone in the country's automotive industry.

Although most of the components used in Proton cars are locally manufactured, their engines are still imported.

Azizan said it has been Petronas's intention to develop and produce engines involving Malaysians to ensure that Malaysia would be able to advance its engineering capability.

He said this ability would not be limited to producing petrol-driven car engines alone but could also be applied to producing other types of engines, including gas-fired ones.

He said it was Petronas's wish to be known, not just as an oil company but also one that possessed engineering expertise.

Azizan said Malaysia needed to improve its engineering prowess so that it continued to remain competitive in the global market.

He said Petronas's partnership with Sauber, a Swiss automotive engineering company, was not merely an image and branding exercise for the national oil corporation, but would more importantly serve as an effective platform for the promotion of research and development as well as nurturing indigenous technology capabilities in automotive engineering within Petronas.

Petronas's partnership with Red Bull Sauber Holding in the Formula 1, for instance, has led to the formation of a joint venture entity known as Sauber Petronas Engineering AG, which fulfills the engineering needs of the Red Bull Sauber Petronas F1 Team.

The partnership is also aimed at enhancing Petronas's knowledge base and expertise in engines, fuel and lubricant composite technology. --

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