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Focus on safety, carmakers told

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THE Government wants local car manufacturers and assemblers to install the latest safety equipment, to help reduce road accidents, Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy said yesterday.

Chan said the Government had no plans to pass laws to compel domestic car makers to integrate safety technologies in their products.

"We want the local manufacturers and assemblers to bring about changes on a voluntary basis. Legislation is the last option," he said to newsmen after launching the Kuala Lumpur International Motorshow (KLIMS) 2003 at the Pan Pacific Hotel.

Also present were KLIMS management chairman Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir and Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA) president Aishah Ahmad.

Chan said this in response to questions that safety standards in local cars were lower compared to imported vehicles which incorporated the latest safety devices.

"Road safety is one component which should not be overlooked by car makers," he said, adding that there was a possibility new gadgets were not installed in local cars due to cost factor.

Chan said an average of 500,000 new vehicles were registered with the Road Transport Department annually and there were about 5,000 deaths as a result of road accidents every year.

"Through our campaigns we have managed to reduce accidents but there is still room for improvement," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Chan said one of the outward manifestations of the country's progress and wealth was the increase in vehicle ownerships.

"In every Budget, the government allocates a substantial amount to develop and improve our transportation network," he said.

Chan said KLIMS was aptly themed "leading the Way Forward" to blaze the path for the automotive industry in Malaysia and it must seek their niche and enhance their technology to remain competitive.

Meanwhile, Aishah said KLIMS had established itself as southeast Asia's major industry and consumers automotive event.

"This year's presentation has chalked up a 50 per cent increase in exhibition space compared to the 2000 event with an equally impressive increase in exhibitors and exhibits," she said.

Aishah said KLIMS expected to woo 350,000 visitors over the duration since it was also a school term holidays.

Tickets to visit the exhibition are available at Putra World Trade Centre, the event venue, at RM15 per adult on weekdays and RM20 on weekends while RM5 is charged for children under the age of 12.

On weekdays, children under 12 accompanying their parents to the KLIMS enter for free while students in uniform or with student identification tag pay only RM5.

KLIMS is organised by the MAA and co-managed by Interexpo Sdn Bhd and Trade-Link Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd.