

PM: Build more hybrid cars

By NELSON BENJAMIN
and MEERA VIJAYAN
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

JOHOR BARU: The Government hopes to see local automotive industry players develop vehicles that use alternative energy sources to reduce dependency on fossil fuel.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this was particularly relevant given the current high oil prices as well as increasing global concerns over depleting energy resources.

"Under the 9th Malaysia Plan, the Government has outlined the need to encourage the use and development of sustainable and renewable energy resources," he said yesterday at the launch of the country's first hybrid cars that run on a mixture of petrol and hydrogen. *(See StarBiz)*

The cars, assembled locally by Johor-based LM Star Autoworld Sdn Bhd, offer 50% fuel savings with a new technology called hydroxene (processing canister where water is broken into hydrogen and oxygen) which was developed by a local scientist.

Abdullah said such technology was in line with the Government's vision to have innovation and creativity drive the nation's economic growth and development into the 21st century.

"As such, other local assemblers and manufacturers should also infuse new ideas and technologies into their own models," he said, adding that LM Star used technology sourced from Dadi Auto of China through a joint venture.



NEW HOUSE OWNERS: Abdullah (left) handing over a mock key to Mohd Azmi Hashim and his wife Radiah Zainuddin, while Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting looks on during the ceremony in Johor yesterday.

Abdullah also hoped that the transfer of knowledge gained from strategic foreign partnerships would continue to provide a platform for local engineers and scientists to come up with home-grown technologies and expertise in the long term.

He also said it was time for local

automotive players to start thinking on a regional or global scale.

"The industry must increase its level of experts which can enhance competitiveness through higher economies of scale," said Abdullah, who commended LM Star's endeavour to export 80% of its cars and its decision to build its

factory in Johor.

LM Star president Abdul Uza Sheikh Mohamad told a press conference that in the initial stage, two models using the hydroxene technology would be open for booking within 10 days.

"We expect the cars to be on the street within the next two months,"

Abdul Uza said, adding that the seven-seater SUV LMG Tourer was priced at RM58,888 and the four-door crew-cab LMG Trekker at RM84,888.

Later in **Masai**, Johor, Abdullah said the Government wanted everyone to have a house to live in and was always looking at methods to build reasonably priced houses.

"Maybe not everyone can own a house, but at least be able to rent a place for a reasonable sum," he said after handing over keys to residents of Taman Desa Rakyat Perdana.

The 1,030 house buyers were supposed to receive their homes in 2001, but the project, was abandoned in 2001, and then revived by Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd in 2004.

In **Pekan**, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said national car producers have accepted the reality that the Government could no longer give them continuous protection. **Simon Khoo** reports.

"They (Proton and Perodua) must take proactive measures to ensure that the national cars remain competitive," he told reporters after launching the first locally-assembled SsangYong Rexton II at its plant.

Najib said SsangYong Motor Company's move to set up a plant in Pekan reflected "recognition for Malaysia on the whole, as it must have carried out a thorough study before deciding to produce here".

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