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## Plan for Bangladesh market progressing well

FROM PT Proton

The company yesterday began shipping the first batch of 50 Proton Preve to Chile. The last time Proton exported its cars to Chile was in 1998.

Last year, Proton sold about 100,000 cars. Sagging sales locally had forced Proton to relook at its strategy and to focus more on overseas markets.

For the Chilean market, the company is selling the Preve at US\$17,000 (RM70,839).

Abdul Harith said the idea to export its cars to Chile came after Malaysia and Chile sealed a free trade agreement (FTA) in February 2012.

"Under the agreement, Proton will be able to enjoy a 6% import duty exemption. It also gives us the opportunity to identify a viable marketplace for the entry of a left-hand drive market for our cars," he said.

He said despite Chile's relatively small volume, it is important for the company to stamp its mark and grow the brand abroad.

"To grow your brand will take many years. It is not something you can do overnight. However, you need to start somewhere, make your presence felt and grow your brand from there."

Proton cars in Chile will be distributed by Andes Motor, a subsidiary of the Kaufmann Group. It signed the distributor agreement with Proton in July last year.

Abdul Harith said Proton is excited to re-enter the Chilean market after it sold almost 3,000 cars in that country between 1994 to 1998.

"Now we have a new partner who is a leading distributor of buses, trucks and luxury



PH by Mohd Anis Nazatul

cars with a vast sales network and proven sales and after sales support.

"Proton will be their first and only passenger car brand to be marketed for the mass market," he said.

Chile has a population of 17.6 million people and a total industry volume (TIV) of about 330,000 passenger cars, said Abdul Harith.

He said with the re-entry of Proton car into Chile, the company is targeting 6,000 to 7,000 car sales for its overall export segment this year compared to the 5,000 units that the company managed to export last year.

Abdul Harith also said the carmaker's plan to export completely knocked down (CKD) units into the Bangladesh market is progressing well.

He said its partner in Bangladesh is building a new plant for the CKD programme. The project is expected to take off from June this year.

Proton is also targeting sales of 1,000 units of Preve, Exora and Saga models in Bangladesh.