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DR M HOPES FOR A TRULY MALAYSIAN CAR

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PM upbeat Proton-Geely collaboration will make this happen

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PRIME Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he hoped the Proton-Geely collaboration will lead to the production of a truly Malaysian car in the future.

He said since teaming up with Geely, Proton had made progress, including launching its first sport utility vehicle, the X70.

"Of course, this car is not designed and built by Proton entirely, but in order to be fast on the road, you have to cut corners," he said after launching the model's four variants here last night.

However, Dr Mahathir said, Proton should continue to make progress and develop new models.

He said the company's recovery would be enhanced by the introduction of the much-anticipated X70.

The X70 is billed as the first premium SUV by a Malaysian automotive brand, and was jointly developed by Proton with partner Geely.

Proton is targeting a new market segment with the launch of the SUV. It has been hailed by the carmaker as the key catalyst for the "total rejuvenation" of the brand.

"I am extremely proud seeing how Proton has grown so much



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, at the launch of the Proton X70 sport utility vehicle at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday.

 PIC BY LUQMAN HAKIM ZUBIR

over the past 35 years. I am sure that it will come up with many more new models which will make the country proud."

He expressed confidence that the X70 would get a positive response from Malaysians.

He said he was awed by the SUV's ability to "communicate" with its driver.

"You can use basic English to give instructions to this vehicle and it will do whatever you order.

"I hope it will also learn to do it in Bahasa Malaysia."

Present were International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Darell Leiking, DRB-Hicom Bhd group managing director Datuk Seri Syed Faisal Albar Syed Ali Rizal Albar and Proton chief executive officer Dr Li Chunrong.

Syed Faisal said he was optimistic the X70 would be "the

point of redemption for Proton". "This is the turning point where the fortune of Proton will reverse in its favour."

Describing the car as Malaysia's first full Internet car, Syed Faisal Albar said the car was equipped with mobile communication technology, an advanced Integrated Cockpit Information System that offered multiple user functions, as well as the ability to stay connected to a mobile device.

"Featuring an embedded eSIM card, the system is preloaded with four apps offering services such as online music streaming, navigation, weather forecast and voice recognition."

Li said the X70 was the result of more than one year of hard work by Proton and Geely engineers, designers and hundreds of other people working together to de-

velop the first premium SUV by a Malaysian car manufacturer.

"Proton is proud of our achievement and it is our belief Malaysian car buyers will be equally proud to own an SUV that will help transform the Proton brand."

"With over 10,000 bookings, it already has a good start, so we will work hard to deliver on our product and brand promise."

Li said delivery of the SUV would commence in the next few weeks.

"We want customers to get their cars as soon as possible. Some have had to wait for over six months, having given their name to dealers before bookings were even officially opened, so Proton is thankful to them for their patience and incredible brand loyalty."

According to Proton, when developing the X70, both the com-

pany and Geely collaborated on multiple levels, including the cross deployment of staff in China and Malaysia, and testing in the Malaysian climate, to a collaboration between local and international vendors.

The company said significant investments were made to its network for the arrival of the X70, including an ambitious network expansion plan by inviting new investors to start Proton outlets and offering incentives for existing dealers to upgrade their facilities to 3S and 4S centres.

To date, the plans for 115 centres have been approved, with 71 already launched this year.

The car is priced at RM99,800 for standard two-wheel drive (2WD), RM109,800 for executive 2WD, RM115,800 for executive all wheel drive and RM123,800 for premium 2WD.

The price is also applicable for Sabah and Sarawak.

In conjunction with the launch, Proton is offering special value-added packages that include free parts and labour for the first service, as well as free labour for five scheduled service appointments within 100,000km or five years.

Proton will also offer low interest rates, from 2.34 per cent per annum, for qualified buyers, unlimited mileage warranty for up to five years and 1GB monthly Internet data for five years.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, at the launch of Proton's first sport utility vehicle, the X70, in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.