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X70 could reverse Proton's fortune, says Dr Mahathir

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He hopes Proton will be able to learn from Geely to design, manufacture and market on its own

by P PREM KUMAR

THE new Proton X70 SUV launched last night will help boost the financial recovery of national carmaker Proton Holdings Bhd, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The prime minister said the recovery of loss-making Proton will be boosted by the new X70, the company's first SUV.

"Since partnering Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co Ltd, Proton has been recovering and I believe it will be enhanced with the latest X70.

"It's not a secret that Proton has made tremendous progress since the partnership and I believe more to come in the future," Dr Mahathir said at the launch of the much-awaited SUV at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre last night.

Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Darell Leiking also attended the launch.

The PM said it was a proud moment for him to launch the Proton X70.



Pic by Ismail Che Rus

The Proton X70 is priced at RM99,800 for 2WD, RM109,800 for executive 2WD, RM115,800 for executive AWD and RM123,800 for premium 2WD. The price is also applicable for Sabah and Sarawak

To recap, Dr Mahathir mooted the idea of a national car in 1983 and later served as the national automaker's chairman until 2016.

Dr Mahathir said the X70, although badged with the Proton symbol, cannot be regarded as a locally made vehicle.

He hoped that in the future, Proton will be able to learn from Geely to design, manufacture and market on its own.

"The car (X70) was not designed and built by Proton entirely," he said, adding that the SUV will be a precursor to

Malaysian engineering capability in the future.

"Maybe in the future, the design and modelling can be done in Malaysia.

"Then, we will have a 100% Malaysian car made in the country, with Geely supporting from the back, of course," said the statesman.

Speaking about the car, Dr Mahathir said he was given the opportunity to test drive the car for several days and he was impressed with its technological improvements.

"The first Proton model

(Saga), if compared to the latest car, it will be seen like a bullock cart. That is how far technology has brought us forward," he said, drawing laughter from over a thousand attendees.

Dr Mahathir also expressed hope that the X70 will be well-received by Malaysians.

"Technology has brought vast improvements and I can't imagine what the cars of the future will be...maybe very soon, you can drive without touching anything in the car, but just a voice instruction."