



News Release

PROTON TO PURSUE EXPORT MARKETS IN 2021

- **Saga and SUVs to spearhead growth in export sales**
- **Target is to double export volume in the next 12 months**

Subang Jaya, 29 January 2021 – Following a year that saw it successfully overcoming challenges posed by the pandemic and launching a second SUV, Malaysian car manufacturer PROTON has set its sights on growing export sales in 2021. A flurry of activity in December that included the beginning of CKD operations in Kenya and the launch of the Proton X70 in Pakistan saw export sales end the year with an increase of nearly 50% compared to domestic sales that grew by 8.8%.

For the coming year, the company has set itself another challenging target of doubling export sales over 2020, assuming that export activities are not overly hampered by restrictions due to the global pandemic. Spearheading the expansion will be PROTON's most popular model, the evergreen Proton Saga, followed by the Proton X70 and Proton X50 as they are gradually introduced to more overseas markets.

Exports to power PROTON's future

The export market is a vital part of PROTON's long-term goal to be the third best-selling automotive brand in ASEAN by 2027. While sales leadership in the domestic market will always be a main priority, the company recognises that in order to grow for the future, it needs to expand its customer base and search for sales in other countries.

Charged with the task of leading the overseas expansion is Steven Xu, PROTON's director of international sales.

"Over the last two years, PROTON's international sales division has been aggressively pursuing export sales in numerous markets. We have deployed multiple strategies to achieve our goals, from shipping CBU vehicles built in Malaysia to inking agreements with local conglomerates to assemble CKD cars to benefit from local tax incentives.

"We targeted to see significant gains in 2020 but those plans were affected by Covid-19. Still, we managed to grow our export volume, enter new markets such as Kenya and even launch the Proton X50 in Brunei barely two months after its Malaysian debut so there are many positives to take in to the new calendar year," he said.

One of the keys to growing exports is having products that appeal to a number of different markets and to comply with the needs of the market. For instance, the Proton Saga exported in Pakistan uses a 1299cc engine instead of the bigger 1332cc motor used in Malaysia as small capacity vehicles are popular. The same model is also sold in Nepal as it was also developed with a heater, a vital component for markets with cold winter months.

The Proton X70 and Proton X50 meanwhile help to project a sophisticated brand image. Armed with advanced software, a voice command interface and a comprehensive driver assist package, both SUVs compete against rivals from Japanese and Korean brands and help define PROTON's messaging in markets where building consumer education remains as a vital step.

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“The Proton Saga remains a popular model in many countries due to its hardiness, practicality and value for money proposition but in order to lift our brand image, it is important for our newer models such as the Proton X70 and Proton X50 to also be exported. This will show car buyers what the company is capable of and help pave the way for us to sell other models in the future to fill up the range,” added Steven.

Collaborating for mutual success

While PROTON's distributors and importers in its export markets are owned by local entities, it works closely with them to ensure there is a cohesive market introduction, promotion and product launch plan to suit local market conditions. By building a consistent brand image, the company is taking steps towards being a global entity and paving the way towards penetration in other regions in the future.

As the CEO of Proton Edar, Roslan Abdullah is not only responsible for Proton's sales volume but also for the marketing and promotion of the brand.

“PROTON as a brand is now over 35-years old and we have strong brand recognition thanks to our previous export activities and participation in international motorsports. However, our products have not been available in many parts of the world for a variety of reasons. Our new range of updated and jointly developed products with Geely presents an opportunity to change the narrative by opening up ownership to more countries and we are optimistic they will find a ready market in many countries,” said Roslan.

“By working closely with our foreign partners, we aim to present a consistent message in all our export markets and ultimately, this will make it easier for the Proton brand name to establish itself in even more countries. This is in line with our aim to promote Malaysia and its vendors on a regional and global level and ultimately, this will raise their competitiveness and benefit the economy as a whole,” he added.

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About PROTON

PROTON Holdings Bhd began as Malaysia's first national car project, founded with the aim to accelerate Malaysia's economic development and lay the foundations for the local automotive industry. In 2017, PROTON entered its next phase to be a modern and global automotive brand; through a partnership between its two principals, DRB-HICOM and Zhejiang Geely Holding Group. Today, PROTON continues to delight its customers with cars anchored on its brand promise of Inspiring Connections, and founded on its core values of always delivering Innovative Technology, Reliability and International standards.