

**SPEECH**

**YB DATUK SERI JOHARI ABDUL GHANI  
MINISTER OF INVESTMENT, TRADE AND  
INDUSTRY**

**ALL NEW PROTON e.MAS 7 PHEV LAUNCH**

**4 FEBRUARY 2026 (WEDNESDAY)**

**MITEC, KUALA LUMPUR**

## **SALUTATIONS**

**YBhg. Tan Sri Syed Faisal Albar**

Chairman, PROTON

**YBhg. Dato' Hairil Yahri Yaacob**

Secretary General, Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI)

**YBhg. Datuk Hanafi Sakri**

Deputy Secretary General (Industry), MITI

**YBhg. Dato' Mastura Ahmad Mustafa**

Deputy Secretary General (Trade), MITI

**YBhg. Datuk Dr. Aminar Rashid**

Chairman, Malaysia Automotive Robotics & IoT Institute (MARii)

**Dr. Li Chunrong**

Chief Executive Officer, PROTON

**YBhg. Dato' Ir. Abdul Rashid Musa**

Deputy Chief Executive Officer, PROTON

Board of Directors, PROTON

Members of the media, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Salam Sejahtera and Good Evening

1. Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to PROTON, as well as DRB-HICOM, and PRO-NET for inviting me to witness yet another milestone in Malaysia's automotive journey. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire PROTON team on the launch of the all-new PROTON e.MAS 7 PHEV.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2. The introduction of the first plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) under a Malaysian badge is both timely and strategic. It offers consumers a practical transition by combining the benefits of electrification with the familiarity and reassurance of conventional powertrains. In doing so, it broadens adoption and presents consumers with an alternative option as the automotive market evolves.

3. Additionally, the higher adoption of energy efficient vehicles, such as PHEVs, is also fully aligned with the Government's commitment to address climate change and significantly reduce vehicle emissions for a greener and more sustainable future

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. In May 2017, during my tenure as Finance Minister II, I witnessed the signing of the agreement between DRB-HICOM and Geely Holding for the acquisition of a 49.9 per cent stake in PROTON. At the time, this decision drew sharply differing views. However, it was a necessary intervention to safeguard our national car brand while avoiding further burden on taxpayers.

5. Nine years on, this strategic partnership has proven to be a turning point for PROTON, reversing years of financial losses and restoring public confidence through the successful introduction of popular models such as the X70. This resurgence is clearly reflected in PROTON's market share, which rose from 11 per cent in 2018 to 19 per cent last year.

6. PROTON maintains a strong presence within the automotive sector, employing over 55,000 individuals and supported by a robust network of local vendors across its supply chain. Over the past five years, PROTON has also significantly improved localisation, increasing the contribution of local purchase value from 53 per cent in 2021 to 67 per cent in 2025.

Distinguished guests,

7. The automotive sector has long been a driver of Malaysia's economic growth. It contributes an estimated 5 per cent (roughly RM82 billion) to GDP and supports more than 700,000 jobs across a sophisticated, high-tech supply chain.

8. Over the past four years, the industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth. In 2025, Malaysia achieved a historic high in total

industry volume (TIV), reaching 820,752 units, clear evidence of a strong domestic recovery in the post-pandemic period. This was underpinned by robust vehicle production, which averaged over 750,000 units annually between 2022 and 2025.

9. At the same time, we are witnessing a significant shift in consumer preferences. While overall TIV grew modestly by 0.5 per cent last year, sales of electrified vehicles (xEVs), comprising electric and hybrid models, expanded sharply by 52 per cent. As a result, xEVs accounted for 8.5 per cent of new vehicle sales whereas hybrid and electric vehicles accounted 8.7 per cent of total cars registered in 2025. This trajectory gives us confidence in achieving our national target of 30 per cent xEV market share by 2030.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. The growth of Malaysia's automotive industry is intrinsically linked to technological advancement, economic progress, and sustainable development. In line with the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030), high-value activities such as EV manufacturing and the integration of advanced technologies have been prioritised to enhance economic complexity and competitiveness.

11. Looking ahead, the future of our automotive sector will no longer be defined by production volume alone, but by technological progress and skilled talent. The Government will continue to promote the Malaysian economy as an open, high-skill hub that thrives on global competition rather than protectionism.

12. We are prioritising investments from car manufacturers that look beyond the showroom floor. We want investments that can commit to technology transfer, local capability building, and workforce upskilling. As we move into the era of software-defined vehicles, our competitiveness will depend on a new generation of software specialists, system integrators, and high-tech engineers. Manufacturers that align with our national aspirations will benefit from access to a world-class supply chain and a regulatory ecosystem built for next-generation mobility.

Distinguished guests,

13. PROTON's adoption of a multi-technology strategy, encompassing ICE, EV, and PHEV variants, complements the Government's efforts to foster a cleaner and more inclusive automotive ecosystem. Beyond the domestic market, Malaysia's automotive

ambitions must also be viewed through a regional and global lens.

14. I am encouraged by PROTON's growing export performance. In 2025, exports reached a 13-year high of 6,000 units, representing a strong 26 per cent increase and reinforcing PROTON's position as Malaysia's leading automotive exporter. This momentum is expected to accelerate further in 2026, with an ambitious target of 8,200 units across more than 30 international markets, nearly doubling the company's global footprint. These efforts directly support Malaysia's broader trade objectives and strengthen our presence within ASEAN and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. The successful transformation of Malaysia's automotive sector rests on strong synergy between the public and private sectors. While the Government provides policy direction, regulatory certainty, and an

enabling environment through the 13th Malaysia Plan, the industry drives investment, innovation, and execution. When policy and industry move in tandem, we accelerate our transition toward a high-tech, net-zero economy.

16. In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that the Government remains firmly committed to guiding Malaysia's transition into a high-income, developed nation. Our strategy is anchored on three pillars: attracting high-value investments, deepening domestic industrial ecosystems, and fostering constructive public-private collaboration. Together, we are building a future where Malaysia's competitiveness is defined by strong partnerships and the resilience of our people.

17. In closing, I would like to once again congratulate PROTON on the launch of the PROTON e.MAS 7 PHEV and commend its continued efforts to expand technological capabilities and product offerings. I wish PROTON every success as it continues to drive Malaysia's automotive transformation forward.

Thank you.