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AUTOMOTIVE
ENGINEERING

By: Ir. Mohd Khir bin Muhammad

Malaysia has accumulated valuable experiences and expertise in automotive engineering since the launch of the national car project in the 1980s. The country had also made strategic investments in acquiring technological know-how from foreign automotive partners.

Malaysia today is one of the few countries in the world with the necessary expertise and technology to design, engineer and build a car from ground up. We are currently the only country in ASEAN with such capabilities and one of the few independent car manufacturers in the world.

The leading role of the automotive industry and its significant contributions to the country's economy and development cannot be denied. Vendor development programs to support the production and manufacturing of components have produced many small and medium scale industries (SMEs) and have contributed much to the industrialisation process of this country.

Much effort has been focused on production and manufacturing during the early stage of the country's venture and only in recent years, emphasis has been given to R&D in order to sustain and advance the technology.

The national car manufacturer, Proton, for example now has its own R&D facilities such as vehicle platforms, prototyping centre, powertrain engineering & services, homologation & testing, engineering development and services as well as engineering research.

The government has been supportive and has encouraged R&D activities in automotive related fields and has provided grant schemes such as the Intensification of Research in Priorities Areas (IRPA) and Industry Research and Development Grant Scheme (IGS) to many public research institutes (PRIs) and universities as well as to the private sector.

With thousands of workforce in the automotive industry where a large percentage are engineers, IEM should put more effort in recruiting more members from this industry. Many student members can also be recruited as some local universities have recently introduced courses related to automotive engineering to meet the growing needs of the industry.

To recruit more members, IEM should be made more attractive to other engineering disciplines and must be seen as beneficial to all disciplines, not just to consulting engineers from the traditional major disciplines.

Automotive engineering itself is multi-disciplinary and it is now becoming harder to clearly distinguish if automotive engineering falls under one of these major disciplines.

Perhaps it is also time for IEM as a leading learned professional society in this country to create a special interest group for automotive engineers or even its own technical division! ■

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ON THE COVER
Automotive Component Parts and Accessories
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