

FROM THE EDITOR.....

In 1885 when Karl Benz first developed an internal combustion engine propelled vehicle he would have never thought that his invention would have such a colossal impact on humanity, both as a gift and a bane. Present development of the mankind, based on personal comfort, consumerism and convenience was aided in no small way by the automobile which has impacted on all social levels. On the other hand, fossil fuel combustion by products as well as other pollutants from automobiles have created a near calamity in the global environment as well as critical sustainability issues.

With that being said, it is glaringly obvious that ownership of an automobile is a social status symbol that had lately being pushed to the proportion of a necessity. Given the human nature, nowadays everyone tends to desire a personal automobile and our country is no exception. Added with the fact that all imported autos involve expenditure in foreign exchange for capital, fuel and spares it really makes economic sense to manufacture our own. If one wishes to stack social factors such as creating jobs, encouraging local equipment supplying industry and national pride, the argument becomes even stronger.

It is within this background that we have to view the rapidly developing local automobile manufacturing and assembling industry. Though the economy of scale in production might not permit us to produce a totally local product, a substantial local component could be injected to justify national contribution and sustain the industry in economic perspective. As has been already done, tapping foreign markets for customized autos is an effective way of alleviating the economy of scale problem.

To be a truly Sri Lankan product we should endeavour to incorporate our national heritage of environmental friendliness into our automobiles, through innovations making them low cost but acceptable quality, low maintenance but functional design, and less environment polluting. This could be the fore preparation for the next energy crisis, which invariably has to come. What Henry Ford did with the model T and Ferdinand Porsche did with the Volkswagen in the 20th century, we should be able to do in the 21st.

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