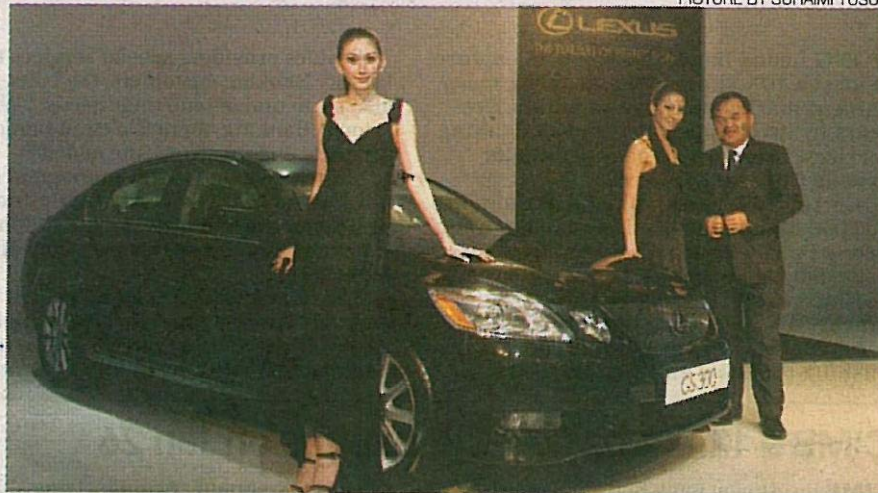




UMW Toyota to tap luxury car market

PICTURE BY SUHAIMI YUSUF



Chen (right) and two models pose with the Lexus GS300 at the official launch of the Lexus LS460L and GS300 models at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday

UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd will focus on building the Lexus brand in the first few years after its debut yesterday and has set an initial sales target of 150 units a year, its managing director David Chen said.

He said brand-building was crucial as the company viewed Lexus as a long-term investment, and the sales target represented only a 2% share of the luxury car market in Malaysia, which sold 7,000 units a year. UMW Toyota is the sole distributor of Lexus in Malaysia.

"We are new in the (luxury car) market. We are not looking at a huge market share. We want to first make our presence known. We are investing into the future.

"We have to see the response to Lexus first. We hope we can build up a Lexus customer base rapidly so that we can see the returns of our investment within the next three to five years," he said, adding

that Lexus' targeted market included UMW Toyota's existing customer base.

Speaking to reporters after the launch of the Lexus LS460L and GS500 models in Kuala Lumpur, Chen said Lexus had a 20% market share in most of the Asian markets, and it might need 10 to 15 years to clinch a similar share in Malaysia.

He said it would spend RM35 million to open a 3S (sales, service, spare parts) outlet dedicated only to Lexus cars in Mutiara Damansara in January, and had allocated a substantial sum for advertising and promotion purposes. He said it would also bring in other Lexus models, namely the RS and IS series, into Malaysia within one year to complete the Lexus line-up here.

The Lexus LS460L and GS500, with on-the-road prices of RM864,458.50 and RM415,688.20 respectively, are available for pre-orders and will be rolled out in January next year. — **By Gan Yen Kuan**