

Honda expects sales to buck market trend

By Zuraimi Abdullah
zuraimi@nstp.com.my

HONDA Malaysia Sdn Bhd says sales of Honda vehicles it distributes here will grow again this year, bucking the widely anticipated contraction of the overall automotive market.

Honda Malaysia managing director and chief executive officer Atsushi Fujimoto said its sales will be about 2,500 units more than in 2008.

Fujimoto has forecast that the total industry volume (TIV) for passenger vehicles should be at about 400,000 units this year.

For 2008, Honda Malaysia's sales grew by the "teens" to a total of 32,486 units, although slightly below its target of 33,000 units. "Despite an eventful year in 2008, especially during the final quarter, Honda has had a pleasant year.

"Although we fell short of our target due to the global financial crisis, we still managed to achieve an annual growth of 14 per cent," Fujimoto said at a media gathering last Friday.

This year should be tough and challenging for the industry at large, he said.

"However, we remain confident and aim to achieve an increased annual target of 35,000 units, which could be translated into 8.8 per cent of the TIV," he added.

Fujimoto said Honda Malaysia will keep on introducing new, refined products and innovations to boost market excitement amid the gloomy situation.

The company gave a sneak preview of the Honda vehicles to be introduced this year during the gathering. These included the facelifted Civic sedan and Stream multi-purpose vehicle (MPV).

The year 2008 for Honda Malaysia was highlighted with the launch of the all-new Accord in mid-April, the all-new Jazz on August 20 and the all-new City on December 18.

Bookings of more than 4,500 units for the 1.5-litre City were received three weeks after its launch. A monthly sales volume of 1,500 units were targeted in the next one year.

For the luxury Accord sedan, sales reached 7,310 units as of December last year, about 52 per cent beyond the model's initial target of 4,800 units.

The Jazz, a premium five-door compact hatchback, attracted sales of 870 units as of end-December last year.

Honda Malaysia also sells the CR-V sports utility vehicle, Odyssey MPV, Civic hybrids and Civic Type R.

