Mei (left) and Jagdev Singh were victorious in the Isuzu D-Max.

Another win for Isuzu

RALLY driver William Mei drove his 3-litre Isuzu D-Max to a stunning victory in Round Three of the AAM Malaysian 4x4 Rally Championship race in Negeri Sembilan recently.

Mei made it a repeat of his Round Two victory when he came from behind to clinch the win in the final leg of the two-day event.

Mei now leads the championship with 38 points while his closest rival Francis Ho trails with 30 points with just one round to go in November.

"It was a tough opening day with an extremely tricky route made worse by the wet and slippery conditions. But conditions were better on Sunday and we managed to do the job," said an elated Mei.

Held in the oil palm estates near Rembau, Negeri Sembilan, the rally saw 11 competitors start in Seremban before heading to the opening 53km stage.

"The D-Max performed flawlessly. On the second day, we built up a good lead going into the final stage," said Mei.

"It was a brilliant drive by Mei," said Isuzu Malaysia assistant manager of product planning Wan Zaqi Zacary, adding that the D-Max entered this time was a new unit and did not undergo any modifications save for the approved improvements made in the interest of safety.

"The D-Max performed very well against the modified T2 category machines. That says a lot about the Super Commonrail Isuzu engine," said Wan Zaqi.

The conclusion of the championship this year is scheduled for November 1 and 2 and will be held in oil palm estates near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

Hybrid technology – A good thing?

DUE to high fuel pump prices, there has been a surge of interest in petrol-electric hybrid vehicles.

For instance, hybrid car sales in the United States, dominated by the Toyota Prius, saw a marked increase this year despite a declining new passenger car market.

It has been reported that waiting lists to buy the Prius stretch to as long as six months in the United States, due to limited supply of batteries for the hybrid car.

Presently, it seems that combining electric drive with the internal combustion engine is the best choice for reducing fuel consumption and emissions.

Hybrid vehicle technology is easily available and it does not require too much engineering.

Of course, there are alternative fuels such as LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), CNG (compressed natural gas), ethanol and hydrogen. Another option is the full electric vehicle.

However, LPG and CNG are non-renewable resources while both ethanol and hydrogen require large amounts of energy to produce.

In the final analysis, one must look at the vast sums of money that have been spent in developing the internal combustion engine to its present technological level. Are we prepared to throw the internal combustion engine away, or can we combine it with something else to obtain the best advantages?

Still, hybrid technology is not new.

In fact, probably the first hybrid car was the Porsche Mixte that was introduced in the early 20th century.

The Mixte used two electric hub motors and a small petrol engine to charge the batteries.

Today, hybrid cars use a similar idea with an electric motor assisting a petrol engine.

Hybrid cars generally come under two broad categories:

(a) Series hybrid: A petrol engine is used to charge the batteries and the vehicle runs purely on electric propulsion.

(b) Parallel hybrid: An electric motor is coupled in parallel with the petrol engine, and is utilised when additional torque is needed. This system can also be configured such that the car starts