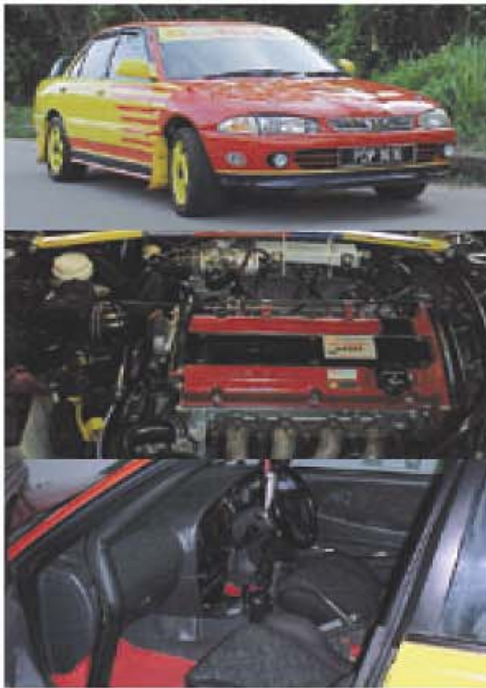


# Motor Trader

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## My Family Car, My Rally Car



**I**N BUTTERWORTH, everyone recognises Suriya Kumar Sankaran's distinctive red and yellow rally-liveried 1800cc Proton Wira. On a good day, you'll find a full roll-cage installed in the car. But outside competition mode, you'll find him driving to work or ferrying his wife and two children in the car. It's a family car that doubles up as Suriya's rally car. It was also a car that F1 ace Michael Schumacher drove recently (story in previous issue).

"The roll cage comes off to accommodate everyday requirements when there's no rally," says Suriya, adding that the red and yellow colour scheme on the car had earlier represented the corporate colours of Shell, which gave him assistance in his rallying pursuits.

Coincidentally, Suriya is an

employee of Shell and that makes him and his car easier to identify as he makes his sales rounds in the northern peninsula. All logos, markings and decals, however, have to be taken off in compliance with the Road Transport Regulations prohibiting unauthorised advertisements on cars.

"There's no harm really in having a car as striking as this when you respect the traffic laws. Occasionally, I do get the odd youngster who tailgates but I just wave them on. This is a rally car in competition. On normal days, it's like any family sedan that you see on the road."

Limited modifications have gone into the car, enabling Suriya to maintain a vehicle that is both competitive on gravel just as it is equally comfortable to drive to the supermarket. The engine is not

extensively modified although it has been ported and polished, and there is a bit of tweaking here and there to squeeze more torque out of it.

Much of the interior creature comforts are kept intact, unlike some enthusiasts who will choose to strip the car of unnecessary parts to lighten the vehicle weight. You'll still find the factory-fitted Recaro reclining seats, an upgraded stereo system, and door panels and floor carpets that are still in pristine condition.

The car, however, is fitted with upgraded suspension, competition-grade engine mountings and bushes, and strengthened in designated areas to boost the rigidity of the chassis. But apart from the colour and giant yellow mudflaps, there's nothing really to give away the rally ready stance of this car. - Harris Iskandar Taib