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Dr M to launch Perodua 4x4 and new logo

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THE much-anticipated Perodua 4X4 will be launched on Aug 24 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will simultaneously launch the second national car manufacturer's new corporate logo.

After launching both the 4X4 and the logo, the Prime Minister will flag off the new model for a nationwide roadshow until the National Day celebrations on Aug 31.

Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Abdul Rahman Omar said yesterday a soft launch of the 1.3-litre vehicle will be held on Aug 1 to allow buyers to make bookings.

The four-seater, five-door model is based on Perodua's partner Daihatsu Terios 4X4, and is aimed at "people who wants to buy a normal (high-priced) four-wheel-drive but cannot afford it".

Despite the declining domestic sales, Perodua is confident of receiving encouraging acceptance for the 4X4 in view of its competitive pricing and eye-catching looks.

The company hoped to sell some 1,000 units of the vehicle per month, Abdul Rahman said during a visit by the New Straits Times Sdn Bhd senior officials and reporters to Perodua's plant in Sungai Choh in Serendah, Selangor.

The visit was led by NSTSB group editor Ahmad A. Talib.

Priced lower than other 4X4s, the Perodua 4X4 is aimed at the passenger car market, and is likely to be a force to be reckoned with in this market segment which is now dominated by the Proton models since the mid-1980s.

The 4X4 comes in both manual and automatic transmission.

The name of the 4X4 is still not known but it is understood that the name will have nothing to do with any animal. The company has chosen a name that better reflects the vehicle's sporty looks and for-leisure purpose.

Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman said the prevailing economic and financial problems had forced Perodua to review its medium-term expansion programme including delaying the introduction of a new model each year till 2000.

The five-year programme, launched early this year, calls for some RM2.3 billion to be invested till 2003 on the introduction of a new model each year beginning 1998 and construction of more production lines, among others.

He said the review also involved the postponement of Perodua's planned introduction of a one-litre passenger car in the year 2000.

This model is expected to use a similar platform as the "bigger Kancil" originally planned to be introduced in the year 2000 and would have an 850cc engine.

However, Abdul Rahman said the company's "project X2001" which focused on the production of a new range of vehicles using the Kancil platform within three years, would go on as planned.

Project X2001 was estimated to cost RM250 million and was progressing well, he said.

Under this project, Perodua - which is working with an Italian engineering and design house - expects to produce vehicles using its own technology and expertise by the end of 2001.

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