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Kancil making inroads in Egypt, land of camels

Syed Nadzri in Cairo

KANCIL, the Malaysian car named after that small, wily animal, is making inroads in Egypt, the land of the camels.

Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd, the makers of the Kancil, are now making plans to initially assemble and later manufacture the car in Cairo together with an Egyptian partner and in collaboration with Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional.

The Egyptian Government pledged full support for the project when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad met his Egyptian counterpart, Dr Ahmad Kamel El-Ganzouri, for a delegation meeting on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir, speaking to Malaysian newsmen on Sunday, said Perodua could take advantage of the many automotive assembling plants in Cairo which are not fully utilised.

Perodua and its Egyptian partner have also been given a large piece of land near the Egyptian capital for the manufacturing operations.

Perodua began exporting the Kancil to Egypt last February. Its first consignment of 80 Kancils were snapped up within the first week of its arrival.

The second consignment of 120 units will arrive in the middle of the month and another 140 units will be shipped here at the end of the year.

Asked if Proton too would be making inroads into Egypt, Dr Mahathir said the national car company was also looking at assembling the car here, given the fact that there is a high duty for imported cars in the country.

Perodua joins conglomerate Sime Darby Bhd in establishing Malaysian presence in Egypt.

Sime Darby Edible Oils Products has been operating in Alexandria since 1991, producing 60,000 tonnes of palm oil products a year through its two refineries which cost US\$40 million (RM156 million) each.

Sapura Telecommunications Bhd, the telecommunications and multimedia company, is also looking for contracts and joint ventures in Egypt while Business Focus Sdn Bhd is looking at the privatisation of the Alexandria Shipyard.

During his discussions with El-Ganzouri which he described as "positive", Dr Mahathir said both countries suggested a third-party co-operation with the Gulf states to increase foreign direct investments in Malaysia.

Apart from that, Malaysia and Egypt also agreed to undertake joint air operations between Kuala Lumpur and Cairo.

At present, Malaysia Airlines is operating the Airbus A330 into Cairo, via Dubai and Beirut. The national carrier, however, does not have fifth freedom rights out of Dubai and Beirut into Cairo.

Malaysia's trade with Egypt totalled RM652.54 million last year. In this January alone, total trade between the two countries amounted to RM110.71 million.

Malaysia's main export items include vegetable oils (fluid or solid, crude, refined or purified), animal/vegetable oils and fats (processed, and waxes of animal or vegetable origin), natural rubber and gums (in primary forms), television receivers, veneers and plywood, electrical and non-electrical household equipment, paper and paperboard, semi-conductor devices, automatic data processing machines and polymers of ethylene.

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