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Perodua's new blueprint

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PERUSAHAAN Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd is charting its second five-year blueprint against the backdrop of stiffer competition in the global automotive sector under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation and Asean Free Trade Area initiatives.

It is believed that the second national car manufacturer is looking at several options which include a bigger presence abroad through new partnerships or the expansion of its current foreign ties.

The move will, hopefully, better prepare Perodua for the future and improve its competitiveness.

Perodua, which started operations in 1994, now has Toyota-owned Daihatsu of Japan as its technical partner and a major shareholder.

Hinting on the new programme on Wednesday, Perodua managing director Datuk Abdul Rahman Omar said details of the plan would be announced once it was finalised.

"We are in the process of preparing our second five-year product lining," Abdul Rahman said after launching the Internet auction of the special edition of the soon-to-be-launched Kenari, Perodua's latest vehicle.

Perodua unveiled its first five-year programme in November, 1996, outlining plans to introduce one new vehicle every year, and a "special model" at the end of the five-year period.

"Under the first plan, we decided that by 1998 we would launch a new car (after Kancil and Rusa), and a new model every year until 2000. And we will be launching a special model in 2001," Abdul Rahman said.

However, the mid-1997 economic crisis hampered the programme, prompting Perodua to delay its purported new models launch by a year and cancel the "special model" launch due in 2001.

This means that the new model which should be unveiled in 1998 was deferred to 1999, and the 1999 model would be launched this year.

The four-wheel-drive Kembara, launched in 1998, was the first new launches since the diminutive Kancil, under the initial five-year blueprint.

The yet-to-be-unveiled Kenari - a family multi usage mini wagon - is originally the 1999 new launch. The Kenari is expected to be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on June 14.

Perodua expects to sell between 1,600 and 2,000 Kenaris per month.

The one-litre Kenari is equipped with electronic fuel injected 12-valve Double Overhead Camshaft engine to provide better driving power and efficiency. It will be priced between RM37,000 and RM42,000.

The car will be available in metallic gold, purple and blue as well as in existing Perodua colours.

Targeted at young families, the Kenari is available in three variants, a one-litre standard (EX) and a one-litre deluxe (GX), both with a five-speed manual transmission and a one-litre automatic (EZ) with a four-speed automatic transmission.

Abdul Rahman said since the company's plant in Serendah, Selangor had reached its maximum annual capacity of 120,000 vehicles, the Kenari production or any increase of other models would have to be done at the expense of certain models.

"If Kenari's demand is very good, we have to reduce production of the other models," he said, indicating that the most likely option would be

the Rusa van.

He added that the increase in production for all Perodua vehicles would only be done in the middle of next year, when the company's plant expansion programme was completed.

Perodua has set aside about RM400 million this year as capital expenditure.

On the Kenari e-auction, Abdul Rahman said a specially fitted Kenari up for auction was to commensurate with the launching of the vehicle, and was also part of efforts to promote Perodua e-Shoppe, an online shopping initiative.

Perodua will donate proceeds of the auctioned Kenari to various charitable organisations through Bakti (the Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers).

The special Kenari on auction comes with a special registration number of WHP 9 and is expected to be sold at around RM100,000.

Those interested to make a bid for the Kenari can visit www.perodua.com.my/kenari. The successful bidder will be presented with a pearl white automatic Kenari on the launching day.

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