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Naza goes Kia

FOR A very long time, the Naza name was associated with the import of fancy foreign cars fetching premium prices. It has now gone Korean with the establishment of subsidiary Naza Kia Sdn Bhd; the sole distributor of Kia cars in Malaysia. With its 56 sales outlets throughout the nation, some 18,000 Kia vehicles are now seen on local roads, ranging from the medium-sized Sephia and Spectra saloons to the Carnival multipurpose vehicles and Sportage four-wheel drives. The group has now progressed with the local assembly of the popular Spectra model which was launched in early October by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The locally-assembled Spectra is the product of an RM80 million project, with the units assembled by DRB-Hicom at its automotive plant in Pekan, Pahang. There are grand plans for the Naza Group to undertake the local assembly once this two-year agreement with DRB-Hicom ends. Naza Group Managing Director Tan Sri SM Nasimuddin SM Amin has raised the prospects of a possible joint-venture partnership with Kia Motors Corp of South Korea to set up a car manufacturing plant costing some RM150 million to RM200 million.

Some 600 units of the imported Kia Spectra have been sold in Malaysia since the model was launched back in February. Naza Kia expects to sell up to 350 units of the locally-assembled Spectra - which has an on-the-road price (excluding insurance) of RM80,000 - over the next 12 months. The locally-assembled Kia Spectra has a 1.6 litre engine with automatic transmission.

Naza Kia has big plans with Afta looming on the horizon. It plans to assemble two more Kia models - the 1.8-litre multi-purpose Carns and a commercial van in April next year. The cars should be available for sale by next October at the earliest.

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