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Poser over name of latest Perodua car

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PERUSAHAAN Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd, better known as Perodua, chose an equine theme for its first two cars - Kancil (mousedeer) six years ago and Rusa (deer) in March 1996.

The second national car manufacturer left the animal world and went for lifestyle with the choice of Kembara (adventure) for its 4WD. But it came back to the animal world with the Kenari (canary).

What next, for its latest offering, a new one-litre car known under its project name of X690?

"Perodua already has names associated with land and air animals. So what is left now?" group managing director Datuk Abdul Rahman Omar asked with a broad smile.

Abdul Rahman did not answer his question but it is obvious that he was referring to the underwater world. And he gave a big clue to the new model's name.

"The initial K will continue to be reflected in our range of cars," Abdul Rahman told NST Business at Perodua's HQ in Serendah, Selangor.

The new and trendy minicar is no longer a secret as it was unveiled at the Kuala Lumpur International Motor Show last December.

The official launch is planned for before National Day, ahead of the original target in October, according to Abdul Rahman. "It's normal for us to unveil our new products before National Day so that we can participate in the parade."

Abdul Rahman, whose five-year contract expires on May 2 but has been extended for another three years, met Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday to "get the Prime Minister's blessing for the official name".

The price?

It will be sandwiched between that of the Kancil and Kenari, he said. The cheapest Kancil is sold at about RM27,000 while the cheapest one-litre Kenari is around RM37,000.

Based on technical partner Daihatsu of Japan's Mira Core model, the electronic fuel-injected X690 with dual overhead camshafts will come in both manual and automatic transmission.

The car will add to the expanding Perodua menagerie and ultimately drive its sales as the company gradually ascends to prepare for the looming free trade auto market in the region.

Perodua now produces over 100,000 Kancils, Kembaras, Rusas and Kenaris a year at its Serendah facility, but it is set to complete the expansion of its manufacturing capacity from 120,000 to 150,000 units a year soon.

Abdul Rahman is not unduly worried over the potential impact of the new car on the sales of the Kancil. This is because some people will continue to buy it due to its affordable prices as well as their income level.