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Hectic day-long tour for Dr Mahathir in Kedah tomorrow

ALOR STAR, Wed. - A hectic schedule awaits Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he arrives here for a day-long official visit on Friday.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to arrive about 8.45am before leaving for Gurun to conduct the ground-breaking ceremony of the NazaKia Motors car manufacturing plant.

The Malaysian-South Korean joint venture promises to liven up the local car industry and also place Malaysia in a better position in Asean once the common customs area for the automotive sector starts in 2005.

After the ceremony, Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali will attend a meet-the-people session held in conjunction with the State Barisan Nasional convention here.

The event will be held at the Sultan Abdul Hamid College. Among the VIPs expected to attend are Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and other party leaders.

Syed Razak, who is State BN chairman, is also expected to hand to Dr Mahathir a resolution on the party's pledge to ensure victory in Kedah during the 2004 general election.

The convention begins at the Dewan MPKS here tomorrow with Syed Razak delivering a keynote address. Speakers include Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin and Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

After the meet-the-people session, Dr Mahathir will leave for Friday prayers at the Al-Bukhari Mosque here.

In the afternoon, the Prime Minister is scheduled to open the RM120-million Asian Composites Manufacturing Sdn Bhd (ACM) plant in Bukit Kayu Hitam.

ACM is a joint venture involving the world's largest aircraft manufacturer Boeing, Hexcel Corp (Boeing's biggest component supplier), local conglomerate Sime Darby Bhd and Naluri Bhd (formerly the controlling shareholder of Malaysia Airlines), with each holding an equal 25 per cent stake.

The plant started production in June last year and makes advanced composite materials for the wings of Boeing's 737, 747, 757, 777 and soon 767 jetliner series.

Dr Mahathir and his wife will return to Kuala Lumpur about 6.30pm after the ceremony.