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Kia's all revved up

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KIA Motor Corporation has set its sight on becoming one of the top five car manufacturers in the world by 2010.

Though it is not far off from that target, local distributor Naza Kia has answered the call to be driven to become the number one car distributor for the non-national makes in Malaysia by 2005.

Managing director Tan Sri Sheikh Mohamad Nasimuddin Sheikh Mohamad Amin said that by 2005, the company aimed to sell as high as 30,950 units.

This will be achieved with the introduction of three new locally assembled models in the passenger, dual-purpose and commercial segments. The three models are the Carens MPV, Pregio 2.7 Diesel and the Sorento 3.5-litre V6 and 2.5-litre diesel, he added.

In 2001, Naza Kia sold 5,072 units of various Kia vehicles. The company currently holds a 1.5 per cent market share.

"This has placed us among the top four brands in the domestic market after Toyota, Nissan and Ford. Considering the short time frame, this is an extremely impressive achievement."

From just one model in 1996, the Kia Sportage, Naza Kia has to date successfully introduced seven models of the Kia range.

"Our plans to grab the No 1 spot is also in line with our long term objective of having our own assembly facilities. We are targeting to hold 12 per cent of the market in 2005."

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in May between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Naza Kia and Kia Motors Corporation to establish a joint venture assembly plant and to make Malaysia a regional hub for distribution for the Asia Pacific Area.

It is learnt the company had offers from many States to set up its assembly facility but that the company was strongly considering either Selangor or Negri Sembilan.

"In our effort is to ensure customer satisfaction is met, we are constantly upgrading our facilities, which are evident with the new 3S centre in Selayang," he said adding that the cost of the facility was RM8 million.

The centre is capable of displaying 50 vehicles, 12 service bays and warehousing facilities.

"We are also increasing the number of outlets throughout the country from the present 60 to around 85 by year-end."

At the same time, the Sorento SUV will be launched in Langkawi in October this year.

The vehicle boasts suspension tuned by Porsche, safety braking system by Bosch, side impact safety sensors by Siemens, side curtain air bag by Autoliv and a four-wheel-drive system from Borg Warner.

It will go head-on with the Toyota Harrier, Land Rover Discovery, BMW X5 and Mercedes ML-Class.

Kia Motors Corporation Asia Pacific president Y. S. Koh said the Korean carmaker was concentrating on the Malaysian market very seriously.

"We are currently restructuring our operations in the region and have shifted from Indonesia to Malaysia."

He added that KMC exports 130,000 CKD packs to 10 countries.

Nasimuddin and Koh were speaking at a Press conference after the company's sales and after sales convention at a hotel in Penang recently.

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