

# Naza to assemble 2 new Kia models

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NAZA Group of Companies, which launched the first national multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) *Naza Ria* on Wednesday, plans to assemble two more Kia models at its upcoming plant in Gurun, Kedah by the middle of next year, said Naza group managing director Tan Sri Nasimuddin Amin.

"When the plant is fully operational, we will launch two new models under *Naza* brand. They are for the local and Asean markets," he said.

He said Naza Kia Sdn Bhd, the group's automotive arm, had been ironing out details with South Korea-based Kia Motor Corp on the proposal, including on component pricing, transfer of technology and technical collaboration.

Naza's RM300mil factory in Gurun is due for completion mid next year. It will have the capacity to produce 50,000 units per year and will employ 1,000 people. Naza is believed to have plans to assemble Kia's sports utility vehicles (SUV) and other MPV models.

"Moving forward, the company would embark on the production of completely knocked down MPV and SUV under *Naza* brand as well as the assembly of passenger and commercial vehicles under the *Kia* brand," he said at the launching of *Naza Ria* and *Menara Naza* by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed in Seri Kembangan.

Naza started business in 1975 as importer of "re-conditioned" Japanese cars before moving on to import luxury cars like BMW, Mercedes-Benz as well as Ferrari and Porsche. In 2001 it ventured into the assembly of *Kia Spectra*.

Nasimuddin said the production of *Naza Ria*, which was based on *Kia Carnival*, was made possible through the group's alliances with local automotive component makers and engineering research firms under the supervision of Kia Motors.

*Naza Ria* is now contract-assembled by Automotive Manufacturers (M) Sdn Bhd in Pekan, Kuantan.

He said the group planned to sell 7,000 units of *Naza Ria* this year. "Bookings have exceeded 4,000 units and we expect response to be overwhelming after the launch," he said.

The 2.5-litre seven-seater MPV is priced at RM98,888 for private registration and RM99,277.91 for company registration.

Dr Mahathir said he believed Naza group could grow and become the third biggest national car producer in the country.

"The history of Naza is quite amazing. In such a short period of time, it has progressed rapidly and now has many outlets in the country selling luxury cars. I hope Naza will be able to capture a good MPV market both in Malaysia and overseas," he said.