

25/08/2003

Malay dailies come up with two `first' stories

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THE first national multi-purpose vehicle, to be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Wednesday, will be priced around RM98,000, Berita Minggu reported yesterday.

The page one report stated the 2.5 V6 MPV, to be known as Naza Ria, is modelled after the Kia Carnival. It will be distributed by the Naza Group of Companies through its subsidiary, Naza Automotive Sdn Bhd.

Mingguan Malaysia yesterday also had a "first" story - applications to become the first Malaysian cosmonaut. Applications to become the first Malaysian in space can be sent once a committee to be chaired by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was established.

National Space Agency director-general Prof Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman said the eligibility criteria were being formalised with Russia. The programme is part of the Sukhoi SU-30 fighter jets deal signed with Russia.

"Rice On Three Ships Seized", read the page one headline in Mingguan Malaysia yesterday.

According to the report, Customs officers seized the rice at the Sandakan and Tawau ports.

Customs deputy director-general Abd Rahman Abd Hamid said the first ship from Port Klang was carrying 20 containers of rice from Myanmar. Investigations showed the approved permit for the commodity was not issued to Padiberas Nasional (Bernas) but one of its subsidiaries. Under the regulations, APs to import rice can only be issued to Bernas.

Rahman said they discovered a second ship unloaded only five containers of rice at Tawau instead of seven as listed in its documents. Two containers could not be traced and were considered as "missing".

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung announced that the public would not be allowed to bring in rice from across the borders. The move was to curb smuggling.

In another story on Saturday, Berita Harian reported that the number of Malaysians permitted to perform the haj in Mecca remained at 25,000.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said the first haj flight would be on Dec 27 and the last on Jan 24. The Saudi Government would only allow Malaysian pilgrims registered with Tabung Haji to perform the haj.