

## **BMW aims to export 10,000 CBUs a year**



BMW has doubled its annual car production capacity after the expansion of its facility in Rayong. KWANCHAI

German luxury car maker BMW Group Thailand is beefing up its completely built-up (CBU) exports this year and next, aiming to ship 10,000 cars annually, mainly to China.

The rise in shipments fits in with the company's international growth strategy after its Munich-based parent company last September announced a 1.1-billion-baht expansion of its Rayong facility, operated by BMW Manufacturing (Thailand).

The expansion finished earlier this year, with the factory doubling its annual production capacity to 20,000 BMWs and Minis.

Motorcycle production has also shot up from 1,000 to 10,000 per year.

The Rayong factory has been shipping BMW cars to Malaysia since 2006 and started exporting motorcycles to China last year. To date, the two countries are the plants' only international destinations.

According to president Matthias Pfalz, the car shipments this year will primarily focus on two models: BMW X3 and X5.

The Rayong facility now makes eight models for BMW and one for Mini: BMW 1 Series, 3 Series, 3 Series Gran Turismo, 5 Series, 7 Series, X1, X3, X5 and Mini Countryman.

It also assembles eight models of BMW Motorrad: the F700GS, F800R, F800GS, F800GT, S1000R, S1000RR, R1200GS and R1200GS Adventure.

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A total of 1,000 units of BMW Motorrad were shipped to Malaysia and China last year. The group is studying the feasibility of exporting more motorcycles this year to Asian markets, which are fast growing.

Mr Pfalz said the group had set up an international purchasing office at its Thailand operation to ship auto parts and components to 30 factories in 14 Asian countries.

The group also plans to assemble BMW's plug-in hybrid electric vehicles for the first time at its Rayong plant. The BMW X5 xDrive40e will be the first hybrid model to be sold in the country since the group started importing CBUs last year. The vehicle is priced at 5.39 million baht.

Last year, the group posted record sales of 8,768 cars, up 5% from the previous year. BMW accounted for 7,751 units, up 4%, while Mini celebrated its first four-figure year with 1,017 cars delivered, a 10% increase. BMW Motorrad set a new milestone with 1,280 motorcycles, a record-shattering 83% jump from the previous year.

