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PETRONAS/PROTON DEVELOP MONOGAS VEHICLE, PM LAUNCHES NGV TAXI

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Petronas, the national oil corporation, and Proton, the national car manufacturer, have jointly developed an environment-friendly monogas vehicle.

This, said prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, "augurs well for the development of the natural gas vehicles (NGV) industry not only in Malaysia but also in the region."

He later launched the Malaysian NGV taxi prototype at the 5th biennial international conference and exhibition on natural gas vehicles today.

The taxi launched represents a national initiative to develop public transportation that is environmentally-friendly, efficient and uniquely suited to meet passenger needs.

The NGV monogas engine in this prototype reduces carbon monoxide emission by as much as 64 percent and nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbons emissions by about 25 percent.

Dr Mahathir hoped that the monogas vehicle could be adopted as part of an Asean programme to overcome air pollution problem in the region.

"To this end, closer cooperation must be fostered at all levels - local, regional and international, as air pollution is borderless," he said.

At a press conference later, Dr Mahathir said an Asean adoption for natural gas was crucial for the natural gas industry as Malaysia alone could not provide a demand that could reduce related cost.

He said the Petronas initiated monogas vehicle project obtained its parts from Renault.

In a separate news conference, Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainol Abidin, said the prototype project was part of a programme to make natural gas as a cleaner alternative fuel.

"We undertake this research and development (R&D) project to bring awareness of the possibility of using gas as a transportation fuel," he said.

He, however, declined to reveal the investment placed by Petronas and Proton on the project.

"Most of the R&D are on monogas conversion and on the location of the tank," he said, adding that the R&D on tank location was to ensure that the tank would not take much of the vehicle boot space.

"We will discuss with parties interested to further develop the NGV, including commercialisation," he said, adding that so far only Proton would be one of the partner for commercial production.

Petronas chief executive officer Datuk Hassan Marican said the NGV taxi prototype was "only launched this morning...nobody else knows about it."

He hoped the car would be an Asian taxi, but pointed out that the project did not mean that Petronas wanted to diversify into automobile production.

"It is our contribution to R&D of the nation," he said.

Asked whether Petronas would sell the technology subsequently, he said: "We will see what is going to happen."

On when the prototype would go into commercial production, Hassan said it would depend on the testing and approval by the relevant authorities.

He further said that it took Petronas and Proton 18 months to complete the R&D for the prototype. -- BERNAMA

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