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WATER-BASED FUEL SET FOR ASIAN LAUNCH

SINGAPORE, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Sceptics, even until today, say it cannot be done but a new water-based fuel is now available in 10 cities in the United States.

Called A-55 and A-21 (A for aqueous), the fuel which can compose between 30 and 55 percent water, is to be available in Asia - from Japan to India and down to the Pacific - by next year.

The Ling group of companies, which operate in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, has acquired the exclusive distribution rights in the Asia Pacific region for the A-55 fuel.

Alex Ling Lee Soon, who heads the Ling group, also sits on the boards of the Hock Hua Bank Bhd and Hock Thai Finance Corporation Bhd.

To prove the aqueous fuel's viability, Ling said it would be tested on Proton cars soon and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be invited to witness it.

Invented by American Rudolf Gunnerman and under development for nine years, the A-55 is a boiler fuel while the A-21 (21 for the 21st Century) is an engine fuel.

The US state of Nevada had in November 1995 certified the A-21 and A-55 as a "clean alternative fuel" which means that it meets emission regulations.

The A-21 and A-55 is touted as cleaner, less expensive and safer than conventional fuels such as diesel or gasoline.

The fuel is made up of mainly water and naphtha - the first by-product of crude oil refining - and about two percent "additive package."

The additive is the magic formula, said Peter Gunnerman, son of the inventor, who is Vice President - Operations of the A-55 Limited Partnership, the Reno, Nevada-based company set up by his father.

"The additive package is like the Coca-Cola formula," he said here today. The whole fuel and the additive package have been patented.

The Gunnermans and Alex Ling were in Singapore for a presentation by the A-55 Limited Partnership today.

Rudolf Gunnerman said he had been told many times that it could not be done "as water and fuel do not go together."

He added: "The additive package, which mixes the water and naphtha together, also allows the fuel to remain stable, increases fuel lubricity and protects against corrosion and freezing.

"During the Second World War, fighter bombers had water injected to cool the engines in order to provide more boost."

Rudolf Gunnerman was 11 years old when he migrated from Germany to the US after the Second World War.

The aqueous fuel is less expensive since it uses water and naphtha (which requires minimal refining) and is less flammable than diesel or gasoline and, thus, safer to handle.

The aqueous fuel does not readily ignite outside the combustion chamber and must be placed under heat and pressure to burn.

Initial applications of the A-21 and A-55 fuels include diesel engines, utility boilers and heating units and the A-55 could also be used as a supplement to coal in utility boilers, cutting pollution at power plants.

Distribution of the A-21 and A-55 fuels was possible using automated facilities that blend the water, naphtha and additives at any site. --

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