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1,000 NGV taxis coming from France

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Petronas plans to import 1,000 natural gas-powered taxis under its Taxi NGV Petronas Project to convince more operators to switch to the fuel.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Abang Mustapha said the project involved the manufacture of 1,000 taxis by the French company Matra Automobil.

Petronas is of the opinion that the public transport sector, especially taxis, is the best platform to begin natural gas vehicle operations.

"The first 12 taxis will be brought into the country in April next year. From then on, 100 taxis will be brought in every month," he said at the National Gas Reticulation Seminar today.

He said Petronas would use the 1998 Commonwealth Games as a platform to educate the public on the use of natural gas as an alternative environment-friendly fuel which was cost efficient compared to conventional fuels like diesel and petrol.

"About 400 units will be used as public transport for the 1998 Commonwealth Games," he said.

Under the project, Proton and Renault cars would be used. Last year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad unveiled the prototype Malaysian NGV taxi.

The 1,000 imported taxis will be dedicated NGV vehicles. Currently, NGV taxis are dual-fuel vehicles, with drivers able to use both natural gas and conventional fuels.

Abu Bakar said the major difference with the dedicated NGVs was the load-bearing capacity, with the taxis able to seat five passengers.

Petronas will appoint a local company to distribute and manage the taxis under the project.

The project is supported by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. Approvals have also been obtained from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. There are 11 NGV stations in Malaysia, all of which are in the Klang Valley. Future plans include six NGV stations in Putrajaya.

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