

07/06/1997

Electric cars to be made in Malaysia from next year

Rashid Yusof in London

ELECTRIC cars will be manufactured in Malaysia from next year, introducing to the market pollution-free and silent cars, said to be perfect for city traffic.

The Perusahaan Otomobil Elektrik Malaysia, a joint venture company with Tenaga Nasional as its majority shareholder, announced on Thursday that it would also produce other electric vehicles.

These are the solar baby (an urban passenger vehicle), electric motorcycle, golf buggy and electric kart.

The venture will use the technology of Frazer-Nash, a UK-based firm, which is Tenaga's main partner in Poem.

The vehicles were tested by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he visited Frazer-Nash's research and development centre in Mychett Place, 56km from London on Thursday.

The Prime Minister later gave his thumbs-up and commented to Malaysian reporters: "It works well. Gradually, the electric cars will develop a new market, not just in Malaysia, but elsewhere too."

The Prime Minister, who is on two months' leave, said he believed the golf buggy would do well.

Dr Mahathir said the electric car was a different category from the Proton and hence was not a competitor.

The equity structure in Poem has Tenaga having a 50 per cent equity; Frazer-Nash 40 per cent; Composite Automative five per cent; and Tan Sri Basir Ismail five per cent.

The 50:40:5:5 structure will later be 40:30:20:5:5: to bring in another party involved in the initial negotiations. Initial paid-up capital is RM10 million.

Early production at Poem's temporary plant at one of the buildings of Universiti Tenaga Malaysia in Bangi, will concentrate on "solar baby" - for use at airports, and resorts - the golf buggy, and kart.

The plant will begin with 30 to 40 employees.

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