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FIRST BATCH OF "SOLAR BABY" TO ROLL OUT THIS JULY, SAYS TAJUDDIN

KAJANG, June 21 (Bernama) -- The first batch of the environment-friendly electric vehicle called "solar baby" will be in the local market this July, said Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) executive chairman, Datuk Dr Tajuddin Ali.

However, he said the first batch of the electric vehicles would only be for test market and not for the general market.

"We are trying to bring in suitable components from Britain for the local assembly and we hope that the first batch can be completed by July for market testing," he told reporters after the launching of TNB's Working Enforcement Directory at University Tenaga Nasional here today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had recently announced that TNB was leading the Malaysian-Britain joint-venture project in the manufacturing of a silent, pollution free and environment friendly electric vehicle that would be ideal for use in the urban environment.

Tajuddin said that first batch of "solar baby" would comprise of utility vehicles that include golf-buggies and go-carts.

A total of 40 units would be manufactured for the first batch while the appropriate name of "solar baby" in the Bahasa Malaysia's version would be determined soon, he said.

Potential users have been identified while companies such as Malaysia Airport Bhd and a few other golf clubs had expressed their intentions to test drive the electric vehicles.

A company called POEM (Perusahaan Otomobil Elektrik Malaysia) has already been formed between Fraser-Nash Research Limited, an engineering and electronics research company, and four Malaysian investors, namely Tenaga Nasional, Composite Automotive Research (CAR), Musteq Industries and the chairman of the FIMA group of companies, Tan Sri Basir Ismail in his personal capacity.

Tajuddin, who is also chairman of the two-month old POEM, said the first batch of "solar baby" would be assembled by 15 staffs that would report for duty on July 1.

After the first 40-units, another 200 units would be produced for usage at the Langkawi International Maritime Aviation (LIMA), to be held by the end of this year.

Asked when the vehicles would be produced for commercial use, Tajuddin said: "Most probably next year".

On June 6, Dr Mahathir had tested the prototype electric four-wheelers and a motor-cycle on the grounds of an engineering research centre in Farnborough, about 32 miles south-west of London. -- BERNAMA

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