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Production of electric cars next month

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia's first electric car, manufactured by Perusahaan Otomobil Elektrik Malaysia, will go into production next month, Tenaga Nasional Bhd executive chairman Datuk Dr Ahmad Tajuddin Ali said today.

Forty of the POEM's "solar babies", comprising the electric golf buggy and kart, will be used at airports and resorts as part of a trial run to gauge its effectiveness before full production starts.

Ahmad Tajuddin said the components, comprising electrical and electronic parts from Britain and the locally-made chassis and external outlay, will be assembled here within two weeks.

An initial staff of 15 will do the assembling at a workshop in the Universiti Tenaga Nasional campus, he told reporters after launching the Tenaga Nasional Guide Book at the campus in Kajang.

Ahmad Tajuddin said he has received numerous requests from Malaysia Airport Bhd and several golf resorts to participate in the trial run.

Another 200 "solar babies" will be produced after the first batch and before the end of the year to fulfil requests for the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition in December.

POEM, whose shareholders are Tenaga Nasional (50 per cent), Britain-based Frazer-Nash (40 per cent), Datuk Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh's Composite Automative Research (five per cent) and Tan Sri Basir Ismail (five per cent), is also producing electric cars and motorcycles for the foreign market.

The vehicle, known as the "city car", is expected to be manufactured in Malaysia from next year and likely to be priced within the range of the Perodua Kancil (about RM28,000 to RM35,000).

The electric motorcycle is expected to be manufactured at about the same time and will be priced comparably with the Modenas national motorcycle.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had given the thumbs up to the electric vehicles, saying that, if they work well, gradually, the electric cars will develop a new market, not just in Malaysia, but in foreign markets too.

Dr Mahathir tried out the vehicles during his visit to Frazer-Nash's research and development centre in Britain on June 5.

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