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Demand for electric cars

Cheah Chor Sooi in London

PERUSAHAAN Otomobil Elektrik (M) Sdn Bhd (Poem) has received orders to contract manufacture over 1,000 units of electric-powered cars since its successful outing at the recent Sydney Olympic Games.

The company has to date sold about 3,000 units of the cars in Asia, Australia, Europe and the United States.

Poem is a joint venture between Tenaga Nasional Bhd and British research firm Frazer-Nash Research Ltd (FNR).

The cars were manufactured at Poem's plant in Hicom-Glenmarie Industrial Park in Shah Alam.

FNR managing director Cliff Winckless said a total of 324 units of the Poem vehicles costing about US\$5,000 (RM19,000) each, were sold to the organisers of the Sydney Olympics.

"We have the capacity to manufacture about 20 vehicles a day or about 6,000 annually.

"We have also been approached by the organiser of the Sydney Games to market the electric cars worldwide," he said.

Poem currently produces more electric cars than any other car manufacturer.

Winckless was speaking to Malaysian journalists after a three-hour visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the FNR research centre in Mychett Place near Farnborough on Monday.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by FNR chairman Kamal Siddiqi, also had the opportunity to test drive Poem's hybrid electrical car powered by rechargeable battery.

Among Poem's popular range include the golf buggies, jeeps and Solar Babies.

The target markets include buildings with big compounds like resorts. The cars are also widely used in TNB power plants nationwide.

TNB chairman Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis, who was also present said the utility giant's stake in Poem has been reduced to 20 per cent or RM10 million to allow FNR to hold a controlling stake.

"However, the 20 per cent stake will be sufficient for us to access the technology as well as local market share," added Jamaludin.

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