

Proton plans to produce electric car
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In view of escalating oil prices and depleting reserves, the world's auto giants are in the race to produce hybrid cars powered by a combination of combustion engine and electric motor.

National carmaker Proton Holdings Bhd, however, takes a different approach - to come out with a pure electric vehicle (EV).

Proton corporate planning general manager Badrulhisham Mohd Ghazali said an EV would be a sure thing based on several studies conducted by the company.

"If we look it now, China is actively developing EV technologies. Among the reasons are economic and political factors," he told Bernama at the recent Proton carvival in Kota Bharu.

He said China's population was more than one billion, so it would require a cheaper and cleaner energy source.

China was rapidly developing and after opening its doors to the world, the country was now an economic powerhouse. The income of its people and their purchasing power had also increased, he said.

"It means, demand for cars also rises. This will become a burden for China because it does not have petroleum," Badrulhisham said.

Hence, he said, the country needed alternative energy sources for its transportation sector and the quickest and most effective was to use EVs.

In terms of EV technology development, China seemed to have overtaken Europe. "If previously Europe pioneered the EV technology, China now is far ahead," he said.

He said Proton took the same steps because the direction of the market was towards the use of EVs.

"We are developing the technology. At present, the system has not stabilised. Besides, costs for the battery are still expensive," he said.

As oil prices would increase further due to depleting reserves, EVs would be a need and this would happen in the not too distant future, Badrulhisham said.

The present hybrid technology was a transition towards EV, he added.

"We have tried using an hybrid engine for the Proton MPV Exora and our hybrid engine received world recognition when it won the Best Range Extender Electric Vehicle in the challenge from Brighton to London last November in Britain," he said.

He said Proton would expand the market for the Exora in 2012.

He said a hybrid engine had limitations as it was only suitable for cars with medium-capacity and used a Lithium Ion battery, making the cost expensive and life span shorter than a petrol engine.

"So the answer for a car is one that is fully electric," he said.

- Bernama

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