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TRANSPORT

Tuk-tuks targeted in EV subsidy scheme

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Energy policymakers have promoted the first commercial launch of electric vehicles (EVs), starting by offering a 106-million-baht subsidy to encourage tuk-tuk owners to switch over from liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

The subsidy comes from the Energy Conservation Fund (ECF) and will be granted to the first 100 tuk-tuk owners who switch to EVs. The first 10 owners will be granted a 100% subsidy, while the other 90 owners will be granted an 85% subsidy, said Twarath Sutabutr, director-general of the Energy Policy and Planning Office.

The subsidy covers the cost of converting the vehicles' engines to be EV-compatible. The median price was determined in a study conducted by the Energy Ministry and King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Mr Twarath said.

Energy Minister Anantaporn Kanjanarat said he expects up to 22,000 tuk-tuks to switch from LPG to EV by 2025.

The subsidy is part of a project to promote EVs and EV facilities in Thailand, as the country aims to become a regional EV hub over the next several years.

Last year, the ECF allocated more than 120 million baht in project finance for the development of 150 EV charging units in Bangkok and its outskirts, of which 79 are already up and running.

The other 71 units are scheduled to be operational by the end of next year.

Mr Twarath said policymakers are also mulling over a plan to encourage motorcycle taxis to switch over to electric. A feasibility study for that project is currently being conducted.

EV promotion was initiated in 2012 by state utilities and a national oil firm, although it was strictly for internal use. In 2015, policymakers widened the scope by setting the national agenda of making



A fleet of e-tuk-tuks situated at the Pullman King Power Hotel. PATTARAPONG CHATPATTARASILL.

Thailand a global EV production base.

As a result, EVs have been pegged as an alternative, environmentally friendly form of transport, along with other forms of biofuel, to help avert risks from fluctuating global oil prices.

Mr Twarath said EVs are also different from other alternative sources of fuel because they are being promoted in

several regions across the world and are not country-specific.

That has helped ensure that EV promotion will be a viable, long-term policy being supported by the government, he said.

Thanate Poompo, an adviser to the chairman of Clean Fuel Energy Enterprise Co, said C-FEE was founded with the cooperation of GS Yausa Co and local auto parts

producers to develop EV batteries that are lighter in weight, with a longer life and shorter charging time.

Local producer C-FEE is expanding exports of EV tuk-tuks in Asean. A budget for the project has not been revealed.

Mr Thanate said C-FEE has a facility in Pathum Thani with capacity for 30 units per month.