

A Greener Way of Transport

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One of Thailand's main policies is to encourage and invest in research that would strengthen the electric vehicle (EV) industry. One of the ongoing tangible projects is the collaboration between the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), and National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA). It started in 2010 and plans to complete its EV Kit & Blueprint Project in modifying its first car this November.

Research is key to success

This project aims to design seven of the EV's main parts for local production by Thai entrepreneurs in the future. The project intends to acquire new knowledge and to brainstorm appropriate designs, in order to replace the internal combustion engine with a 100 percent battery-based EV. The use of batteries as power generators for EVs is a big challenge for Thai researchers, as they work on developing the related technology.

Pimpa Limthongkul, Senior Researcher in Electrochemical Materials and Systems at the National Metal and Materials Technology Centre (MTEC), says that the goal of this research is to improve battery technology and enhance Thailand's competitiveness in the global market. She encourages the Government to introduce tax incentives and exemption of import duties for EV parts, as well as import facilitation for necessary products.

Apichart Prasitnarit, President of Real Estate and Partnerships Trade Association, and CEO and co-founder of Angel City Co. Ltd. believes that EVs and smart cities are part of the global trend that is affecting our lives. In this regard, Thailand's Partnerships Trade Association has initiated activities such as the EV prototype design contest for undergraduate students to promote knowledge and understanding of EVs among the young generation.

Penetrate different markets

As EV is new and unfamiliar, new market penetration is necessary for building a strong foothold. In addition, there has to be different business models for approaching different target customers. For example, the strategy of "Strom," a Thai electric motorcycle launched by OSKA Holding Co., Ltd. in 2017, is to manufacture products based on the number of orders. Customers can make special orders by modifying the 6 available model designs that caters to specific demands.

According to Somboon Orn-Norm, Production and Training Manager at OSKA Holding Co., Ltd., the company has been discussing the production of electric motorcycles with many customers, in order to send them a batch of such motorcycles for operational use. Some customers are helping to design and test the motorcycles to ensure that it fits their requirements,

such as in producing motorcycles for deliveries. If these electric motorcycles become successful, they would constitute Thailand's first "green logistics," as they operate without gas and noise emissions.

The electric tuk tuk, Thailand's 3-wheel motorcycle, is another example of collaboration between Urban Mobility Tech Co., Ltd., and Sikorn Co., Ltd. These two companies explain that their project facilitates customers in calling for tuk tuks around Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok, by using the mobile application "Tuk Tuk Hop." This application provides service on demand with a fee of 299 baht per person per day. Customers can call tuk tuks to pick them up or drop them off anywhere around the island, at any time of the day. They can enjoy a stress-free trip as all drivers are well-screened. There are currently 7 electric tuk tuks and 30 traditional tuk tuks in operation, while another 18 electric tuk tuks are waiting to be registered. The companies add that the demand for tuk tuks is currently higher than the supply so they are manufacturing more. In the meantime, the companies also provide services via "MuvMi," which is an application for sharing transportation.

In 2020, Urban Mobility Tech Co., Ltd. and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) will cooperate on software development for electric tuk tuks, including the software to provide information on travel and tourism for customers. The company also plans to expand its service to cover popular areas such as Siam Square, Central World, and Pratunam, as per customers' requests. "I don't think it's just an electric tuk tuk and a transport application, but that it's one way of using innovation to solve transportation problems in our country," says Supapong Kitiwattanasak, Co-founder and Business Development Executive of Urban Mobility Tech Co., Ltd.
