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# TNB ready to lead transition into low-carbon mobility

*The electric utility company is keen to drive a collaborative approach towards decarbonisation*

by NUR HANANI AZMAN

TENAGA Nasional Bhd (TNB) is geared up to lead Malaysia's transition into low-carbon mobility, not only as the infrastructure provider, but to drive a collaborative approach with a coalition of stakeholders towards decarbonisation.

TNB chief strategy and ventures officer Datuk Fazlur Rahman Zainuddin stated that it is important for the country to start looking into accelerating the transition into low-carbon mobility seriously, especially battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

"We see several major barriers hindering the adoption of EVs in Malaysia, including the lack of public EV charging infrastructure. As an electricity provider, TNB has been approached by industry players with regards to this.

"Together with Malaysia Green Technology Corp, TNB has installed 73 charging stations in 31 locations last year to better understand the needs and expectations," he said during the Energy Sector Round Table Engagement #2 on Low Carbon Mobility on Monday.

Fazlur said there have been several encouraging signs of private sector investment into Malaysian public EV infrastructure of late, including the planning of several direct current (DC) fast chargers along the roads.

"It is important for any investors to ensure that their infrastructure will be reasonably utilised and not become stranded assets.

"For TNB, we have been exploring several business models to drive up the foundational support for EV adoption in Malaysia.



Fazlur urges the country to have more EV charging infrastructure as it is one of the major barriers hindering the adoption of EVs in the country

"We believe that by working with like-minded partners, we can build a strong foundation to encourage more acceptance for low carbon mobility," he added.

Malaysian EV Owners Club president Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi said as of May 2019, there were 194 BEVs registered in Malaysia and roughly under 500 charging points.

He said fewer than 20 of those are DC rapid chargers, which are required for BEVs.

"The demand for second-hand BEV today is incredibly high as hobbyists are keen to get them to convert to internal

combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and also for DIY home energy storage systems.

"Therefore, there are not a lot of commercialisations of these yet," he said.

Shahrol said electric two-wheelers use smaller batteries which will undergo more charging cycles and therefore will degrade more quickly.

"Two-wheeler demand is there but the price difference between EV and ICE two-wheelers are too great, which is why we do not see more of them on the road.

According to a TNB-UM Power Energy Dedicated Advanced Centre study, even with the current fuel mix, EVs are 23% cleaner than ICE.

On electric buses, he said the challenge lies in the government's subsidy for diesel fuel, which makes it difficult to justify the higher purchase cost of EVs.

"In other countries, this is offset since maintenance and operating costs of EVs are lower, so until we address that we shall not have many BEV buses," he said.

Meanwhile, Transport Ministry deputy secretary-general (policy) Normah Osman said the government has always focused on driving the shift from private vehicles to public transport.

Mass transit would not only reduce emissions, but also road congestion, a particular trait in urban areas such as the Klang Valley.

Among the few projects in the pipeline include Mass Rapid Transit II; the Putrajaya Line which is expected to be fully operational by 2023; and the East Coast Rail Link, expected to commence by 2027.

"To complement our rail services are the public bus services, the backbone of our public transport system.

"In the greater Kuala Lumpur alone, we have more than 1,500 buses in operation, which equals about 20 buses per 100,000 population," she said, adding this number is still short of the target of about 50 buses per 100,000 population, as suggested by the World Bank.

Normah reiterated that driving an electric car in Malaysia can be challenging given the lack of infrastructure that supports en masse usage of electric vehicles.

"As of March 2021, there are 421 charging points nationwide, with targets to increase the amount to 125,000 by 2030.

"I am certain with the upcoming launch of the EV industry policy, Malaysia will scale up and spur the EV industry," she said.