



Car sales charging up

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JAGDEV SINGH SIDHU
jagdev@thestar.com.my

THE Malaysian motor vehicle industry is on high rev again, with sales of electric vehicles (EVs) leaping upwards.

With the industry understandably seeing some sales fatigue after strong numbers the past two years, focus has been on the strong move by EVs.

The rise in the sales of EVs has been driven by the tax-free status this group of cars has enjoyed the past few years.

In 2021, total sales of EVs were 850 units. That surged to 2,631 in 2022, an 800% increase. In 2023, the number of EVs sold was 10,159, a 286% improvement from the earlier year.

Last year, EV sales reached 14,800 units. Sales of EVs have continued their strong run this year but, of late, there has been a twist.

Competition within the EV space in Malaysia has been fierce in 2024 in terms of sales, with the two biggest brands in the world dominating.

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■ Proton's *e.Mas 7* has sold 1,001 cars in January and February

■ Key driver for EV sales has been the tax exemption

■ Price adjustments expected as EV sellers jostle after RON95 is 'floated'

BYD was the number one best seller in Malaysia in 2024, accounting for nearly 40% of sales. This was followed by Tesla with sales accounting for nearly 24% of total EV industry volume.

Things have changed this year, though. Sales have been dominated by Proton with its latest EV car.

Proton's *e.Mas 7* has sold 421 and 580 cars in January and February respectively, good for first place in the table.

The obvious reason for the market leading position was the price point of the *e.Mas 7*. It is more affordable.

That meant that no matter what, affordability still trumps brand name and technology. It's quite the same for sales of internal combustion engine cars in the country.

The key driver for EV sales in Malaysia, though, has been the tax exemption which will continue until the end of this year.

Looking at sales of EV cars in South-East Asia, Thailand leads overall in battery electric vehicle (BEV) sales with an

estimated 10% of total sales. In 2024, total sales of cars in Thailand's were almost 573,000 units.

In Indonesia, BEV sales were estimated at between 20,000 and 25,000 units.

Total sales of cars in Indonesia last year were around 866,000 units.

Singapore is also a large market for EV cars in the region.

With the promise of 10,000 charging stations by the end of 2025, EV car sales are progressing nicely in Malaysia.

The total number of charging stations is estimated to be substantially below that target but it is rising.

Efforts by Tenaga Nasional Bhd, along with other private sector players, are expected to push the number of charging stations upwards, increasing the appeal of EVs to potential buyers.

But what will drive sales is also the introduction of more Malaysian makes. The *e.Mas 7* has already given a lift to sales, bringing an affordable segment of EV cars.

Perodua too is introducing its own affordable EV car this year, more for positioning in the market but there will be a twist in terms of how the battery of its EV car is packaged.

There are reported plans to lease to battery to avoid having a huge replacement cost after the warranty of the battery ends.

That should also help stabilise the resale value its EV car.

How EV sales progress for the rest of the year will undoubtedly rest on what the unsubsidised price of RON95 will be after July.

With the price of RON 95 expected to be "floated" for the top 20 income earners of the country, there surely will be a lift in EV sales in the country.

As it is, the T20 are estimated to be the largest purchasers of EV cars in the country.

Thailand has the best BEV sales in the region because the price of its Gasohol 95 petrol is estimated around RM4.86 a litre.

The more expensive the price of petrol is, the higher the sales of BEV cars.

The infrastructure rollout in the country matters, too. What will make the market more dynamic also is the price adjustment of EV cars in the country.

We have seen BYD *Atto 3 Ultra* drop its price to match that of the top *e.Mas 7* car, indicating that market share will be what EV brands aim for to ensure they stay competitive.

It would not be a surprise that more of such price adjustments happen as EV sellers jostle for sales after the price of RON 95 is "floated".

