

UPSKILLING LOCAL TALENT IN THE EV INDUSTRY

Automotive engineers, technicians and even first responders need to be fully equipped with the right knowledge on handling EVs in order to prepare for the future demand of EVs

As the automotive industry in Malaysia gradually transitions to electric vehicles (EVs), technicians and engineers in this industry need to be upskilled to keep up with the changing landscape.

Datuk Seri Ben Yeoh, executive chairman of Bermaz Auto Bhd, says this is especially critical when it comes to handling EVs, as it involves dealing with high voltage vehicles.

First responders such as the police and firefighters also need to be upskilled, he adds, as they are the frontliners who respond to emergency situations, whether it's a vehicle collision or breakdown.

"We have the Mazda MX30 and the Kia EV6. We will also be bringing in the Peugeot e-2008, which means that all three brands that we are retailing will have EV vehicles. We need to prepare our technicians during this transition by [equipping] them with the right skills," says Yeoh.

To this end, Bermaz Auto has established a training programme for its technicians and first responders, so that they understand the different components of an EV and how to handle the vehicle safely.

These programmes are run with external

service providers and technical experts. After attending the sessions, the technicians will continue to pass down the information to other people in the ecosystem, such as mechanics, and provide them with the proper accreditation and certification.

"They will be looking at different components such as batteries, electrical motors and software systems. We have to upskill and recruit technocrats in the IT industry because the skills needed involve the merger of traditional mechanical automotive engineers with IT technocrats," says Yeoh.

"I believe this kind of talent is still rare here, that's why we are investing in it. We're getting expertise from Europe because they have been doing this for many years already, especially in Finland and Norway. The technical expertise in Europe is strong, so we've made sure that the training programme that we undertake is in line with that of developed countries."

The training facility is also in line with the company's plans to offer completely knocked down (CKD) EVs here. "We have joint ventures with Mazda and Kia, where we assemble and manufacture cars for the domestic and regional market. We will continue to do this and include EVs. We will do the same with Peugeot too," says Yeoh.

CKD cars are assembled at a local manufacturing company and are fully exempted from sales tax, which



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▶ The Kia AV6 has AC current outlets inside and outside the vehicle to power devices and lifestyle accessories



translates into cheaper cars for Malaysians.

The training programme content will be customised for different audiences. First responders and those typically involved in rescue operations will go through a basic course, predominantly focused on the protective equipment to be used for EV-related accidents and how to safely respond to emergency situations.

Meanwhile, Bermaz's technicians will undergo a three-year course to understand the technologies in EVs and how to repair them.

"Fortunately, EVs have fewer complicated components than internal combustion engines and there are fewer moving parts. The critical

▲ The Mazda MX-30 is among the electric vehicles that are being retailed by Bermaz

areas that they have to look at are the controls and the electrical and electronic components, which can easily be diagnosed using scanners and diagnostic equipment," Yeoh elaborates.

"The critical areas that we always look at include things like tyres because the weight of a 100kW battery is almost the same as that of a small car. Therefore, it has a lot of influence on tyre wear and tear, as well as the brakes."

Currently, 25 participants are enrolled in Bermaz's training course. They are placed in a three-year programme, where they will work and train at the same time. After the training, they will go on to train the company's new recruits. 📍 By Vanessa Gomes