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Unimas seeks to develop electric car

RM200,000 is all the university needs to come up with full-scale prototype, says lecturer

Nigel Edgar

SAMARAHAN: Will Sarawakians one day be driving home-made electric cars?

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) is now embarking on a journey to develop Sarawak's first and very own electric car.

However, before that can be realised, Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts (Faca) lecturer Dr Saiful Bahari Mohd Yusoff said they would need a grant of up to RM200,000 from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) to produce a full scale prototype.

"Unimas also provides a total grant of RM15,000 to all students but that is just enough for them to make a 1:3 scale," he said during the sneak peek of the second year Industrial Design students' assessment project at Unimas here yesterday.

"Once we have chosen the best, we will present it to Mosti to apply for the grant to start the full-scale project," he said.

A total of seven 1:3 scale electric car-related projects were presented yesterday.

The faculty will be choosing the best one which they will present to Mosti for the much needed grant.

Saiful hopes that with the grant, Unimas would be able to produce its own electric car to be commercialised in the future.

"I am very confident that we can get the grant because

we (Faca) have been working closely with Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Mimos) which is under Mosti for a few years now," he said, pointing out that this would be the first time Unimas would be applying for the grant.

Saiful revealed that once the electric car project is running, it would be useful in the tourism industry.

A 'charging port' where all the electric cars are supposed to be parked and maintained, say at the Kuching International Airport, would be useful to tourists, he said.

"Tourists can then rent the cars for them to go anywhere in the state. 'Charging ports' would also be set up along main tourists' spots in the state to charge the cars," he said while explaining that an electric car has a range of about seven to eight hours of usage.

According to him, there are other local higher learning institutions developing their own electric cars.

"They are Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Johor, Universiti Institute Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Shah Alam and University

Darul Iman Terengganu to name a few.

"These universities are focusing on the technology behind electric cars, and are mainly developed by their researchers and students. Unimas on the other hand is focusing on design and styling as well as involving students. That's the beauty of it," said Saiful.

Meanwhile, Post Graduate and Research of FACA Deputy Dean, Assoc Prof Khairul Aidil Azlin Abdul Rahman said Unimas aimed to develop local Sarawakian students to produce high value products.

"The electric car is a high value product. Higher learning institutes and universities overseas are also doing this kind of projects. These are the things we teach the students and we hope they can contribute to the state and country," he said.

He also said that Sarawak already had the talent but lacked support.

"I think the ideas and talents we have already. All we need is support and sponsors to make it (electric car) commercialised. The most important thing is collaboration, we have smart partnership with Mimos," he said.

I am very confident that we can get the grant because we (Faca) have been working closely with Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Mimos) which is under Mosti for a few years now.

Dr Saiful Bahari Mohd Yusoff, Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts (Faca) lecturer

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THUMBS-UP: Assoc Prof Khairul (left) and Saiful (second left) posing beside one of the electric car models developed by the students.