MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR

21st Edition August 2024 ~ November 2025

Published by: Mobility Media Sdn Bhd
12A, Jalan Rimba Riang 9/5A, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Malaysia Car of the Year 2025 ~ 2026

eISBN 978-629-95581-3-2

21st Edition August 2024 ~ November 2025

Search **Mobility Media My** to connect with us on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok & YouTube

CONTENTS

“Platforms like MCOTY play a vital role in raising standards and strengthening our automotive ecosystem.”

Yang Amat Berhormat Datuk
Amar Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof
Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia

Malaysia
CAR OF THE YEAR

Celebrating its 21st year, the Malaysia Car of the Year (COTY) 2025 stands as the definitive compass for the Malaysian motoring public. Since its inauguration in 2002, our mission has remained singular and steadfast: to transform rigorous, professional technical evaluation into a practical, trusted buying guide for the everyday consumer.

The automotive landscape in 2025 has reached an unprecedented peak of complexity, marking a historic turning point for the industry. This year's judging process has been the most challenging yet, reflecting a market in the midst of an exciting transformation. We are witnessing a record-breaking influx of new marques, sophisticated electrified drivelines, and cutting-edge Advanced Driving Assistance Systems (ADAS). This explosion of technology means there is an overwhelming variety of cars for buyers to choose from, making the need for expert, independent guidance more critical than ever.

Our panel of 12 judges—the majority of whom boast over a decade of specialist experience—volunteers their time and expertise to distill this market noise. A cornerstone of our modern identity is our strategic partnership with the Malaysia Automotive, Robotics and Internet of Things Institute (MARii). As a specialized agency under the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI), MARii's involvement has been transformative. Having first endorsed the awards nearly a decade ago, MARii now co-organises the event with a specific mandate: to identify the champions of the Malaysian automotive supply chain. By evaluating the depth of local content in cars assembled here, we ensure that the awards actively promote the growth of local industry and homegrown engineering talent.

The shift in consumer preference over the last decade is starkly visible in our 9 main categories. Ten years ago, the SUV category was a niche minority; today, it has swapped places with the once-dominant Sedan to become the largest and most competitive segment in the country. Simultaneously, Electric Vehicles (EVs) have emerged as the fastest-growing segment, driven by rapid infrastructure development and a surge in Chinese marques, which are aggressively gaining market share from legacy carmakers.

Our methodology remains transparent and tough. Every contender is scored against eight core criteria, including styling, cabin ergonomics, engines, transmissions, ride and handling, safety, value for money, and environmental friendliness. Over 17 distinct price segments, only the highest-scoring models earn the title of "Best in Class." The ultimate accolade, the Overall Car of the Year, is drawn from this elite pool of winners.

All results and expert insights are published in our Annual Guide, available as a free PDF download on the Malaysia Car of the Year website. By making this data accessible, we empower Malaysians to make informed decisions. As we celebrate 21 years of excellence, Malaysia COTY 2026 continues to bridge the gap between industrial innovation and the steering wheel in the driver's hands.

Yamin Yong

KEYNOTE

Yang Amat Berhormat Datuk
Amar Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof
Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia
Malaysia Car of the Year Awards Gala Dinner 2025 | 22 January 2026

Standing here this evening at the Malaysia Car of the Year Awards 2025, I am reminded of the responsibility we all share to guide progress with purpose and conviction.

It is both an honour and a privilege to return to this event and to stand once again at the same spot as last year. It is a quiet but meaningful reminder of continuity, consistency, and commitment, commitment not only to this platform, but to the people, ideas, and industries that move our nation forward.

Tonight is more than a celebration of outstanding vehicles. It is a recognition of vision, innovation, and collective effort. Over the years, MCOTY has grown into a respected benchmark, reflecting excellence in performance, safety, sustainability, and technology. More importantly, it reflects how far Malaysia's automotive industry has come and how much further it is prepared to go.

The automotive industry remains one of the most critical pillars of Malaysia's manufacturing sector, second only to Electrical and Electronics. It is not merely about assembling vehicles. It is a complex ecosystem made up of vendors, engineers, designers, logistics providers, toolmakers, and skilled workers each playing a vital role in sustaining our industrial backbone and supporting livelihoods across the country.

Yet, we must also confront an undeniable reality. When combined with road transportation, the automotive sector contributes close to 20 per cent of global carbon emissions. This reality has driven nations worldwide to accelerate efforts towards decarbonization and zero-emission mobility.

However, transitions of this scale demand honesty and realism. A technology refined over more than 150 years cannot be replaced overnight. What we are witnessing today is an in-between era,

where hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and extended-range electric vehicles are emerging as practical transitional solutions.

There are ongoing debates on whether hybrids slow down full electrification or enable it. These are valid discussions. What matters most is not ideological purity, but practical progress. Global climate commitments are being recalibrated — not abandoned — to reflect economic realities, technological readiness, and social impact. Malaysia must do the same, responsibly and thoughtfully.

Our responsibility is clear. We must support the mobility and energy transition in a way that is credible, inclusive, and practical, while safeguarding our local automotive industry from being hollowed out by sheer global scale. This is why the automotive sector sits at the heart of Malaysia's mobility transition, guided by the National Energy Transition Roadmap, or NETR.

Our approach to transition must be orderly, inclusive, and economically sustainable. Progress must not come at the expense of affordability, industry

viability, or national resilience. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “The future depends on what we do in the present.”

Every decision we make today on energy policy, infrastructure readiness, and industrial development will define the competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience of our automotive sector for decades to come.

As I have often emphasized, Malaysia’s energy transition must be anchored on three fundamentals: security, affordability, and sustainability because a transition that is not secure or affordable will never be sustainable.

Electrified and low-emission vehicles do not operate in isolation. Their success depends on the strength of the energy system behind them grid readiness, clean generation, charging infrastructure, and skilled talent. Malaysia is strengthening energy security while accelerating renewable energy deployment and grid resilience.

The Energy Trilemma — security, affordability, and sustainability — applies just as strongly to the automotive sector. Vehicles of the future must not only be advanced and clean, but affordable to operate and supported by a reliable energy ecosystem. This integrated approach ensures that electrification progresses hand in hand with infrastructure development, workforce upskilling, and long-term system resilience.

It is not a choice between sustainability and economic growth. As Angela Merkel once said, “Climate protection must be a central part of modern economic policy.” We must and we will pursue both.

Tonight, we honour 34 category winners, culminating in the Car of the Year, the very best across all categories.
Each award represents investment, innovation, and belief in Malaysia’s automotive future.

I would like to record my sincere appreciation to Mobility Media Sdn Bhd, the Malaysia Automotive, Robotics and IoT Institute (MARii), and the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI) for their unwavering commitment in organising this significant event.

Platforms like MCOTY play a vital role in raising standards and strengthening our automotive ecosystem.

To all nominees and winners, congratulations. Recognition tonight is important, but your continued investment in Malaysia matters even more. You are contributing meaningfully to our shared national journey.

Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Yang Amat Berhormat Datuk Amar Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof admiring the winning Car of the Year, the Zeekr 009

FOREWORD

The Malaysia Car of the Year awards remain the gold standard for automotive excellence in our nation.

Congratulations to the winners of MCOTY's 21st edition. You are the architects of Malaysia's mobility future.

Reflecting on the 2025 Surge

Looking back at 2025, the data tells a remarkable story of adoption. According to the JPJ Dashboard on data.gov.my, sales of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) nearly doubled—surging from 21,789 units in 2024 to a record 44,813 units in 2025.

This growth was fuelled by the four-year CBU (Completely Built-Up) tax holiday that concluded on December 31st.

This policy served its purpose: it sensitized the Malaysian public to electric mobility and seeded the market with world-class technology. Malaysia's motorists responded enthusiastically to the sudden surge of new EV cars at never-before value-for money prices.

The New Era: Protection for Local Production

As of January 1st, 2026, we have entered a new phase. The tariff barriers have returned for CBU EVs, but this is not a step backward. It is a strategic pivot to protect and promote local assembly (CKD).

The government's message is clear: To enjoy the Malaysian market, you must invest in Malaysian workers and Malaysian factories. We are transitioning from being a nation of EV consumers to a regional hub for EV production.

Addressing the "Cliff": The Role of National Brands

Many have asked: Will EV sales drop off a cliff now that the tax holiday is over? My answer is a firm "No."

The momentum is being sustained by our national pride. Proton has successfully launched the e.MAS 5 and e.MAS 7. These locally-assembled models are hitting the market at highly competitive prices, ensuring that the transition to low-carbon mobility remains accessible to the Rakyat, not just the elite.

Perodua, the Second National Car, has taken a longer term approach to sustainable mobility and has invested RM800 million on R&D to integrate components and make its own EV.

By localizing the supply chain, we are insulating the consumer from the impact of CBU tariffs. The energy transition continues, uninterrupted and more "Malaysian" than ever.

Global Context and Policy Agility

We are acutely aware of the global landscape. The European Union's recent decision to shift the ban on Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) sales from 2030 to 2035 reflects the complexities of infrastructure and consumer readiness.

Malaysia will remain pragmatic. While we are committed to our Net Zero 2050 goals, we will keep our policies agile. We will not be dogmatic; we will balance environmental necessity with the economic reality of our automotive sector.

Tonight, we celebrate the "Car of the Year." But beyond the engines and batteries, we celebrate the spirit of an industry that refuses to stand still.

Whether it is high-efficiency ICE, PHEV, or the new wave of locally-made EVs, the goal remains the same: a safer, cleaner, and more prosperous Malaysia.

Salam Malaysia Madani .

Azrul Reza Aziz

Chief Executive Officer
Malaysia Automotive Robotics
& IoT Institute MARii

PREFACE

The Malaysia Car of the Year was conceived in 2002 with a simple purpose: to help Malaysian motorists make better, more informed choices when buying a car. At the time, I was Editor of Cars, Bikes & Trucks, a weekly automotive supplement in a mainstream publication, and the idea grew out of our responsibility to readers who relied on us not just for news, but for perspective.

What began 24 years ago as a modest effort by five automotive journalists from Aideah Communication Sdn Bhd has since evolved into a respected annual benchmark within the local automotive landscape.

The principle, however, has never changed. Cars are judged by people who test, drive, analyse and live with them as part of their daily professional work — automotive journalists serving voluntarily, guided by experience and ability to distinguish between bling and innovation.

As the title suggests, the Malaysia Car of the Year recognises an Overall Winner, selected from among the winners of individual categories. This ensures that the top honour is not a single-issue triumph, but a reflection of excellence across the various automotive genre, including but not limited to SUVs, sedans, sports and performance cars, and pick-up trucks.

Today, the judging panel comprises 12 individuals from eight media channels, including two female automotive journalists, as well as one practitioner each from the legal and medical professions. While diverse in background, they share a common trait: enthusiasm for cars and motoring. Together, they represent a broad cross-section of Malaysian automotive voices.

This 21st Edition Buyers' Guide marks the second year as a stand-alone hard-copy publication. It carries forward our tradition where we published the annual guide on newsprint and the weight of more than two decades of voluntary effort, collective judgement and respect for readers. It remains, above all, a guide created for car buyers — by people who want a motoring lifestyle and the freedom that mobility inspires.

> **Cars are judged by people who test, drive, analyse and live with them as part of their daily professional work — automotive journalists serving voluntarily, guided by experience and ability to distinguish between bling and innovation.**

Yamin Vong
Founder
Malaysia Car of the Year Awards

INSTITUT AUTOMOTIF ROBOTIK DAN IoT MALAYSIA
MALAYSIA AUTOMOTIVE ROBOTICS AND IoT INSTITUTE

Driving Malaysia's Future: The Role of MARii

The Malaysia Automotive, Robotics and IoT Institute (MARii) is a central pillar in the nation's journey toward a high-tech, sustainable mobility ecosystem. Functioning as a specialized agency under the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI), MARii serves as the focal point and think tank for Malaysia's automotive sector. Its mandate is to spearhead the transformation of the industry by integrating cutting-edge robotics and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies into the broader mobility landscape.

Empowering the Supply Chain

A core mission of MARii is to enhance the capabilities of the local automotive supply chain. The institute has provided intensive training programs to hundreds of vendors, focusing on global competitiveness and operational excellence. Key initiatives include:

- Automotive Supplier Excellence Programme (ASEP): A coaching project designed to elevate local suppliers into world-class players through technical assistance and consultancy.

- Lean Production System (LPS): Conducted in collaboration with Proton and Perodua, this program helps vendors eliminate waste and increase manufacturing efficiency.
- CEO/Owner Growth Mindset Programme (COGMP): Tailored for leadership, this initiative transforms business mindsets to support long-term sustainability.

Advancing National Standards

MARii's commitment to technical excellence is exemplified by the National Emission Test Centre (NETC), Malaysia's first full-fledged vehicle emission testing facility. The center enables the validation of vehicles according to international standards, supporting the government's goal of increasing the penetration of Energy Efficient Vehicles (EEV). Furthermore, MARii oversees the MARii Automotive Certification Scheme (ACS), ensuring that local parts and services meet rigorous quality and safety requirements.

Celebrating Industry Excellence

Beyond technical development, MARii plays a visible role in promoting excellence through the annual Malaysia Car of the Year (MCOTY) awards. Co-organised with Mobility Media, these awards recognize outstanding car models, marques, and supply chain vendors. The 2025 edition of MCOTY highlighted the industry's shift toward electrification, with many top honors going to Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs). This alignment with the National Automotive Policy 2020 (NAP 2020) underscores MARii's role in steering the industry toward Next-Generation Vehicles (NxGV) and green mobility.

A Future-Ready Vision

By bridging the gap between government policy and industry execution, MARii continues to future-proof Malaysia's mobility sector. Through its focus on Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS), the institute ensures that Malaysian businesses and talent remain at the forefront of the global automotive arena.

Organised by: MOONMAN | Endorsed by: MARii | Strategic Partner: PWCC

PENANG AUTOSHOW 2026

JOHOR AUTOSHOW 2026

THE LARGEST AUTOSHOW IN MALAYSIA

NOW IN JOHOR & PENANG

Malaysia Autoshow Goes Nationwide—Driving Innovation, Empowering the Future of Mobility.

Experience the future of mobility at the **Penang Autoshow 2026** this May, followed by the **Johor Autoshow 2026** in August.

As strategic hubs for Malaysia's growing new energy vehicle market, these regional editions bring the immersive scale of the national event directly to the northern and southern regions.

Don't miss this premier opportunity to engage with leading manufacturers, explore cutting-edge vehicle technologies, and witness the latest in electric mobility and sustainable innovations firsthand.

3 DAYS

100,000
TOTAL EXPECTED VISITORS

50,000+
SQM

20+ CAR BRANDS

100+ EXHIBITORS

PENANG AUTOSHOW 2026

1ST - 3RD MAY 2026
PWCC, PENANG

JOHOR AUTOSHOW 2026

21ST - 23RD AUG 2026
ANGSANA MALL,
JOHOR BAHRU

GET YOUR TICKETS HERE

Autoshow.my


MotorTakaful
.com
MotorTakaful.com | The smarter choice
Powered by
Malaysia's Best General Takaful Operator
Recognised at the Malaysian Takaful Association (MTA) Takaful Star Awards
for 6 years running (2019-2024)
Takaful
eTiQa
General Takaful

ASEAN's EV Moment — and Why It May Slip Away

By Yamin Vong

Photo credit: ©Emas.proton.com

Electric vehicles are finally taking off across Southeast Asia. Sales of internal combustion engine (ICE) cars are slowing, EV adoption is accelerating, and several ASEAN markets are leapfrogging directly from petrol to battery power at a pace that now rivals, and in some cases surpasses, advanced economies.

On paper, the moment looks tailor-made for regional cooperation: a shared market of 680 million people, low trade barriers, and a once-in-a-generation industrial reset driven by China's disruption of the global car industry.

Yet history suggests that ASEAN will struggle to seize this opportunity collectively. Just as Japanese carmakers once carved the region into national silos of local assembly operations, China's fiercely competitive EV manufacturers are likely to do the same — slicing up ASEAN market by market, rather than building a truly integrated regional automotive ecosystem.

The EV numbers are impressive. In 2025, ASEAN emerged as a global hotspot for electric vehicle adoption, with penetration rates in some countries overtaking those of the United States and the European Union.

Singapore and Vietnam now see EVs account for roughly 40% of new car sales, placing Singapore second globally behind Norway. Thailand has reached about 21%, Indonesia 15%, while Malaysia lags at around 5% to 7%.

The region is experiencing a “double leapfrog” effect, where early adopters moved straight from ICE vehicles to EVs while many of the wait-and-see car buyers have been rewarded by the introduction of Plug-in hybrids (PHEVS) which remove range anxiety.

This shift towards electrification is occurring even as overall auto sales soften. PwC data shows the ASEAN auto market contracted by 1.5% in the first three quarters of 2025, with almost all the decline coming from petrol-powered vehicles.

Vietnam stands out as the exception — and a cautionary tale. VinFast, the local EV champion, is the leading electric brand in Southeast Asia, though overwhelmingly on home turf. It now accounts for roughly 30% of Vietnam’s total auto market, more than double Toyota’s 12%. Total vehicle sales in

Vietnam’s privately-owed car-maker, Vinfast, is the dominant EV brand in Asean’s most vibrant economy.
Photo credit: **©Autovina.com**

Vietnam reached 604,000 units in 2025, with EV sales surging by 200% year on year even as petrol car volumes stagnated or declined.

But VinFast's dominance also highlights the limits of regional integration. Vietnam's EV boom is largely self-contained, driven by a national champion operating within a domestic ecosystem. The charging network, run mainly by VinFast affiliate V-Green, comprises about 3,000 stations. While that scale has supported rapid adoption, some analysts worry that a single-operator model may ultimately constrain broader market growth and competition.

Elsewhere, EV infrastructure remains uneven. Thailand leads the region, with more than 4,000 public charging outlets operated by 21 companies, according to the Electric Vehicle Association of Thailand. Outside Singapore, it ranks highest in charging availability, says Yossapong Laoonual of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.

At the other end of the spectrum, gaps in charging networks continue to weigh on adoption in markets like Malaysia and Indonesia — though others argue infrastructure is not the real bottleneck, noting that most EV owners prefer charging at home or work, where convenience matters more than public coverage.

What is clearer is that ASEAN's fragmented production model is emerging as a structural weakness. Nearly every member state has announced EV ambitions and domestic manufacturing targets. Yet these plans are constrained by local content requirements and national industrial policies that discourage companies from scaling for the region.

> **Malaysia's experience underscores the challenge. Despite becoming ASEAN's largest car market in the second quarter of 2025, EV adoption remains modest. Through October, EVs made up just 4.5% of new registrations, according to government data — well below the regional average of 17% cited by PwC, putting Malaysia joint last alongside the Philippines.**


STARIA.
Make room
for the future.
STR 2107
Find out more
HYUNDAI

In theory, ASEAN should function as a single automotive hub. In practice, it does not. Governments want local jobs, technology transfer, and foreign direct investment — preferably within their own borders. Despite low tariffs between member states, there is no command-and-control structure akin to the European Union, which last year proposed a two-tier tariff system to shield parts of its auto industry.

The result is a familiar pattern. Chinese EV makers, aggressively expanding overseas, are setting up assembly operations country by country. The competition among them is brutal, but the structure is not regional — it is national. This mirrors what Japanese automakers did decades ago, building parallel ecosystems across Southeast Asia rather than a single integrated value chain.

Thailand, long known as the “Detroit of Asia”, is feeling the pressure acutely. Chinese brands are pouring in, drawn by incentives and manufacturing capacity, even as economic growth slows and auto financing tightens. As a cautionary insight to the “take no prisoners” corporate culture of Chinese car companies in Thailand: some of them have sold CBU cars without observing the ratio where they are supposed to export 1.5 locally assembled cars for every car that they sell in Thailand. They are now facing the consequences from Thailand’s government.

Indonesia faces similar headwinds, with a shrinking middle class dampening vehicle demand despite its vast market size and battery-material advantages.

Malaysia’s experience underscores the challenge. Despite becoming ASEAN’s largest car market in the second quarter of 2025, EV adoption remains modest. Through October, EVs made up just 4.5% of new registrations, according to government data — well below the regional average of 17% cited by PwC, putting Malaysia joint last alongside the Philippines.

Cheap fuel, limited charging infrastructure, and subsidies that still favour petrol vehicles are holding EV uptake back. Still, progress is visible. EV registrations surged 44% year on year, led by BYD, Proton, Tesla, Zeekr and BMW.

National carmaker Proton, leveraging its partnership with Zhejiang Geely, has staged a comeback in the EV space. It now holds the number two position in Malaysia’s EV market with a 24% share in 2025 and aims to overtake BYD once production of the e.MAS 5 ramps up. The model was named Most Affordable EV at the Malaysia Car of the Year Awards 2025 — a symbolic win for local industry.

Yet even here, deeper concerns linger. “We still see a lot of Chinese companies not working with local firms,” says a former Malaysia Industrial Development Authority official. “If they bring in their own vendors, it won’t add much value to the local supply chain.”

This is why Malaysia’s second national carmaker, Perodua, invested RM800 million to develop its first EV, the QVE, launched in December 2025. The bet is that in-house research and development will anchor long-term capability, rather than relegating local firms to assembly roles.

The textbook solution is well known. ASEAN members could specialise along the value chain: Indonesia, rich in nickel, focusing on batteries; Thailand supplying mechanical components; Malaysia leveraging its electronics ecosystem.

In theory, such complementarity would build regional scale and resilience.

In practice, ASEAN has been here before. Programmes like Brand-to-Brand Complementation for the auto industry under the broader ASEAN Industrial Complementation (AIC) policy promised integration but delivered limited results. National interests, political cycles and industrial rivalries consistently trump regional coordination.

EVs and China’s upheaval of the global auto industry present ASEAN with its clearest chance yet to break that pattern. But without a stronger framework to align policies and incentives, the region risks repeating history — watching a new generation of foreign carmakers carve ASEAN into familiar silos, one country at a time.

Past Winners

2024

BYD Seal Premium
(Extended Range) EV

2023

Honda City eHEV RS

2019
Peugeot 3008

2018
Proton X70

2017
Honda Jazz Hybrid

2016
Honda Civic

2015
Mazda 2 1.5
Skyactiv

2014
Honda Civic

2013
Volkswagen
Golf 7 GTI

2012
Ford Ranger

2011
Peugeot RCZ

2010
Volkswagen
Classic

2009
Peugeot 308

2008
Mazda 6 2.5
Sports Liftback

2007
Mitsubishi Lancer GT

2006
Honda Civic

2005
Mercedes-Benz
CLS (C219)

2004
BMW E60

2003
Volvo XC90

Inaugural Overall Car of the Year Winner

2002
Perodua Kelisa

JETOUR
Drive Your Future

DASHING

DESIGNED TO DRIVE YOU

When Algorithms Get Cold Feet: Chinese SUVs Meet Mother Nature

By **Harjinder Singh**

Photo credit: ©**Markus Spiske (from Pexels) via Canva.com**

Modern cars have engines with brains. Hidden inside the engine management ECU is a self-protection algorithm, like an invisible nanny who makes sure nothing costly or embarrassing happens. When it works, it is brilliant. Until it fails.

Enter the new wave of Chinese SUVs and pickups, rewriting the automotive rulebook with astonishing speed, tech, and value. They are bold, clever, and unapologetically disruptive. Even the smartest algorithms have limits.

Our first encounter was with the JAC EV pickup truck on a rather ambitious, rocky off-road trail in Pertak. Near KKB.

On paper, it's a competent off-roader. In reality, after some heroic wheel articulation and enthusiastic torque delivery, the truck suddenly decided it had seen enough of this nonsense. Silence. Total shutdown. Not a bang, not a warning, just the digital equivalent of folding its arms and saying, "Enough lah".

After a few minutes of reflection (and presumably a stern internal systems

meeting), the JAC restarted and allowed us just enough traction to retreat gracefully and rethink our route choices.

The second episode involved the Jetour J2, a genuinely capable and proper off-roader. It tackled the terrain with confidence until the transmission and engine management software politely reminded us that there are limits to its wizardry. Again, no mechanical drama, just an algorithm stepping in like an overprotective parent at a playground.

Importantly, this behaviour only surfaced in demanding off-road conditions. On-road, these vehicles are polished, competent, and impressively engineered.

And let us be fair, Chinese manufacturers have fundamentally shaken up the SUV market. They have delivered design, technology, and value that legacy brands are still scrambling to respond to. They have become a major disruptor.

What we witnessed was not failure, but a lesson on limits. As Chinese brands continue to evolve, one suspects future algorithms will be a little braver. Case in point: how BYD reworked the suspension in its Seal after receiving feedback.

Until then, just remember: when the trail gets tough, your ECU might decide it's time for a tea break.

Photo credit: **©Michal Robak (from Pexels) via Canva.com**

PANEL JUDGES

Profile photos of Judges are by Mahira Mulio

ADAM AUBREY

Editor and Content Producer at **Zigwheels.my**

ADAM began his automotive journalism journey in 2013 with Cars, Bikes & Trucks in the New Sunday Times.

Since then, he has worn many hats —editor, content producer, and currently, editor at Zigwheels.my.

Known for his no-nonsense approach, Adam delivers sharp, insightful commentary on cars, industry trends, and the evolving automotive landscape through his writing and videos.

CHIPS YAP

Senior Motoring Journalist, Editor of **MotaAuto.com**

Chips has been reporting on the motor industry for over 40 years, covering a broad spectrum of topics from industry developments to new product evaluations.

He has also acted as consultant for foreign market research companies who have drawn on his extensive knowledge of the local auto industry.

ERYWAN NOR SHAL

Managing Editor and Motoring Reporter

38, studied computer science but started working life as a court reporter in 2005 with Harian Metro. Like in most newspapers in the old days, the rookie reporter gets the motoring assignments and Erywan found himself in charge of the motoring beat in 2010. Currently, he's in electronic media and in 2016 was promoted to Managing Editor of Astro's www.dreber.my.

GOGULAKANNAN KANDIAH

Journalist and Owner of **Bigwheels Malaysia**

Gokul is an ever-evolving automotive content creator who is well-versed in Malaysia's passenger vehicle, motorcycle, and commercial vehicle segments. Currently the owner of Bigwheels Malaysia online portal and “Testpower” YouTube channel, he previously served as an editor at Topgear Malaysia, Carlist.my, Bikes Republic, Mail Motor, as well as Cars, Bikes, Trucks (NST) just to name a few.

Although Gokul began his career as an English writer almost two decades ago, today, he is among the very few automotive content creators who produce automotive content in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. He is also planning to produce automotive content in Tamil language on platforms such as TikTok in the near future to cater to the Indian community in Malaysia.

HANIF SU'IB

Senior Writer di **Engear TV**

Bermula dengan satu kekurangan berbanding manusia lain, namun Hanif anggap kekurangan itu bukanlah satu penghalang untuk terus maju ke depan.

Siapa sangka, dengan kekurangan itu jugalah minat terhadap bidang automotif mula berkembang ketika sedang sabar menanti sesi kemoterapi tamat di usia yang cukup muda.

Daripada zaman Proton Saga meluncur di atas jalan raya sehinggalah zaman Proton e.MAS 7 mengambil alih, Hanif percaya kereta bukanlah sekadar sebuah alat dari titik A ke titik B semata-mata.

Yang penting, teknologi yang disumbatkan itu perlu bersifat memudahkan dan selamat, bukannya bertujuan untuk menggantikan peranan manusia di sebalik roda stereng.

Starting with one shortcoming compared to others, Hanif considers this deficiency not a barrier to moving forward.

Who would have thought that it was this very shortcoming that sparked his interest in the automotive field while he patiently awaited the end of his chemotherapy sessions at a remarkably young age?

From the era of the Proton Saga cruising on the roads to the advent of the Proton e.MAS 7, Hanif believes that a car is not merely a tool for getting from point A to point B.

What matters most is that the technology integrated within must be easy to use and safe, rather than intended to replace the role of humans behind the steering wheel.

HARJINDER SINGH

Lawyer, Motoring Industry Advisor & Off Road Enthusiast

He has advised stakeholders in the motoring industry for the last 20 years His articles have appeared amongst others in the Sunday Times‘s “Cars, Bikes & Trucks”. He has participated in a few monumental off road adventure trips, including the 2010 Trans Amazon 4 x 4 adventure in South America.

JAY WONG

Freelance Automotive Journalist

Jay Wong has garnered over a decade of experience as an automotive journalist who sees vehicles for what they are and provides an unbiased view of all things wheeled. Believing that a German powerplant resides within his chest, coffee is used daily as a “fuel additive”.

LISA KUOK

Publisher, Managing Editor, Motoring Journalist at **Autocarmalaysia.com**

Lisa has been a motoring journalist for over 14 years, writing and editing publications such as Autocar ASEAN, Motortrader, Bike Trader, Fast Bikes and autobuzz.my. Lisa is the Publisher and Managing Editor of Autocar Malaysia Singapore (formerly known as Autocar ASEAN) and is the only female motoring media owner in the country.

Lisa's dream car would be solar-powered, autonomous and maintenance-free. The long list of essential equipment would include matrix laser headlights, LED tail lamps, keyless entry, walk-away auto locks, auto-fold mirrors, hot and cold ventilated seats and a hot/cold box. It would also be capable of zero-to-a-hundred in sub-four seconds and be magically restocked with her favourite snacks, hot tea and chilled carbonated water every day because hydration is important.

SHAMSUL BAHARI MOHD YUNOS

Managing Editor, **Electronikar** and **Fast TV**

A 53 years old Journalist since 1994 , gaining his experiences at New Sunday Times, Motoring page contributor Science and Technology writer , Bikes Trucks News Editor. Furthering his career as a TV3 Dapat Auto presenter, Editor Funtasticko. Currently, Presenter Fast TV Editor Electronikar Managing Editor Ilham Editorial Services.

TEE YEE CHEING

Editor, Chinese division at **KeyAuto.my**

With over a decade of experience in journalism and four years dedicated to the automotive industry, she has built a diverse portfolio of work in the field. Currently, she serves as the Editor at KeyAuto.my, where she explores all facets of the automotive world. Before this, she honed her expertise as an automotive journalist with Oriental Daily News, contributing to the automotive column, and later as a writer for MyWheels automotive platform.

As a judge for the Malaysian Car of the Year (MCOTY) awards, she believes the Car of the Year (COTY) plays a significant role in both recognizing the efforts of manufacturers and providing valuable insights for consumers. By highlighting the year's most outstanding models, MCOTY helps buyers make informed decisions while encouraging carmakers to strive for continuous innovation and excellence.

What excites her most about the future of the automotive industry is the rapidly evolving technological landscape. She remains captivated by the ceaseless evolution of technology and automotive progress. Whether test-driving the latest models or uncovering trends shaping the industry, she is driven by a deep passion for sharing the stories behind the machines that move us.

DATUK DR TEOH SIANG CHIN

Safety Expert & Sustainability Advocate **@Petrolhead**

A Petrolhead to the core – lives to celebrate speed, safety and smart in all human motion. Depressed about the demise of the ICE and the advent of driverless cars. Loves the planet and hopes all humankind will conserve resources and sanity whilst enjoying travel sustainably.

YAMIN VONG

Veteran Automotive Journalist & Chairman, Malaysia Car of the Year (COTY) Panel of Judges

Yamin's working career has revolved around motorised transport. Sedans, SUVs, MPVs, off-roaders, and motorbikes excite him. He is the eternal enthusiast. Astonishingly, Yamin remains engaged as ever, after forty years as a chronicler, trend analyst, and visionary.

His education in statistics and economics (UM 1980) equipped Yamin to track the key drivers of the automobile industry. He charts the shifts in technology, software, and EV trends. He grips the wheel to test the comparative performance of new models.

Business Times (BT) gave Yamin the platform to write his passion. Readers found him a reliable guide. Brands and marketers noted his reviews. In 1998, Yamin and his colleagues initiated the Cars, Bikes & Trucks (CBT) weekly supplement for BT.

By 2002, Yamin felt it was time for deserving brands to be recognised for excellence. He persuaded a core team of motoring writers to formulate criteria for different categories, and to judge winners for the Car of the Year (COTY) -- available as an annual book since 2025.

An avid off-roader, Yamin participated in three tough Camel Trophy challenges. He helped set up the first 4x4 Adventure Club of KL (ACKL) and is a founding member of the Land Rover Owners of Malaysia (LROM).

ZACHARY HO

Freelance Automotive Journalist

Zachary Ho is an automotive journalist with nearly two decades of experience across print and digital media. Wary of overhyped “disruption,” he prioritizes substance over spectacle—focusing on repairability, long-term ownership costs, and technology that actually serves a purpose. He brings a practical, culturally informed lens to evaluating vehicles, favouring those that deliver real value, not just flashy features.

RULES & REGULATIONS

A. Eligibility

1. Only new car models launched in Malaysia between August 2024 and November 2025
2. The panel of judges have the final discretion to exclude a model for the COTY contest if the majority is of the opinion that the model refresh is not substantial enough to merit the model to be included in the MCOTY contest
3. The car model must be available in sales branches/dealerships at the time of the judging process
4. Special and limited editions of models will not be considered for nomination. Models which are launched late in the MCOTY year and which haven't yet achieved 500 deliveries will be nominated for the following year's MCOTY contest

B. Judging Criteria

1. The panel of judges will define the categories of contest
2. Each category of award will have at least three nominees
3. Where there are less than three entries in a category, that category may be homologated into another category as decided by the panel of judges
4. The categorisation of each nominated model is decided by the panel of judges.
5. The nominated cars are to be judged on the following (not in any particular order):

- Appearance
- Interior design and ergonomics
- Value for money
- Practicality
- Performance
- Energy Efficiency
- Warranty

6. EV is a new sector in the Malaysia car market and while the focus will be on energy efficiency, as that is their raison d'etre, the judges will consider other important elements including but not limited to range, charging speed and connectivity.

C. Judging Process

1. The overall Car of the Year will be the highest scoring category winner.

D. Duration of Judging

1. Judging must be completed no later than 30 November 2025

E. Finality of Judging

1. The judges' decisions are final.

F. Peoples' Choice Award

1. Peoples' Choice will be drawn from a list of about 30 best selling cars in the MCOTY nomination year. Invitation to vote by email


ICE I AUTHORITY IN EVERY LOAD
PHEV I POWER.SMART.EFFICIENT
EV I SILENT.STRONG.DOMINANT

EVOLV ELECTRIC MOTORS

JAC MOTORS

T9 PHEV I

Intelligent Hybrid Power Built for the Solutions

COMING SOON

With a total driving range of around **1,000 km** and up to **1,000 Nm** of combined torque, JAC T9 PHEV is built to handle long journeys and tough jobs with ease — from highways to worksites.

Equipped with **ANCAP 5-Star** safety and **ADAS 2.0**, it delivers smarter driver assistance to help keep every journey safer and more confident.

PIONEER IN BEV 4X4 PICK UP

THE MALAYSIA BOOK of RECORDS

BUILD TO DOMINANCE

OMODA | JAECOO

JAECOO J7 PHEV

*JAECOO J7 PHEV is named as JAECOO ***J7 SHS***

EURO NCAP

★★★★★

Test 2025

CHERY

FIVE-STAR SAFETY

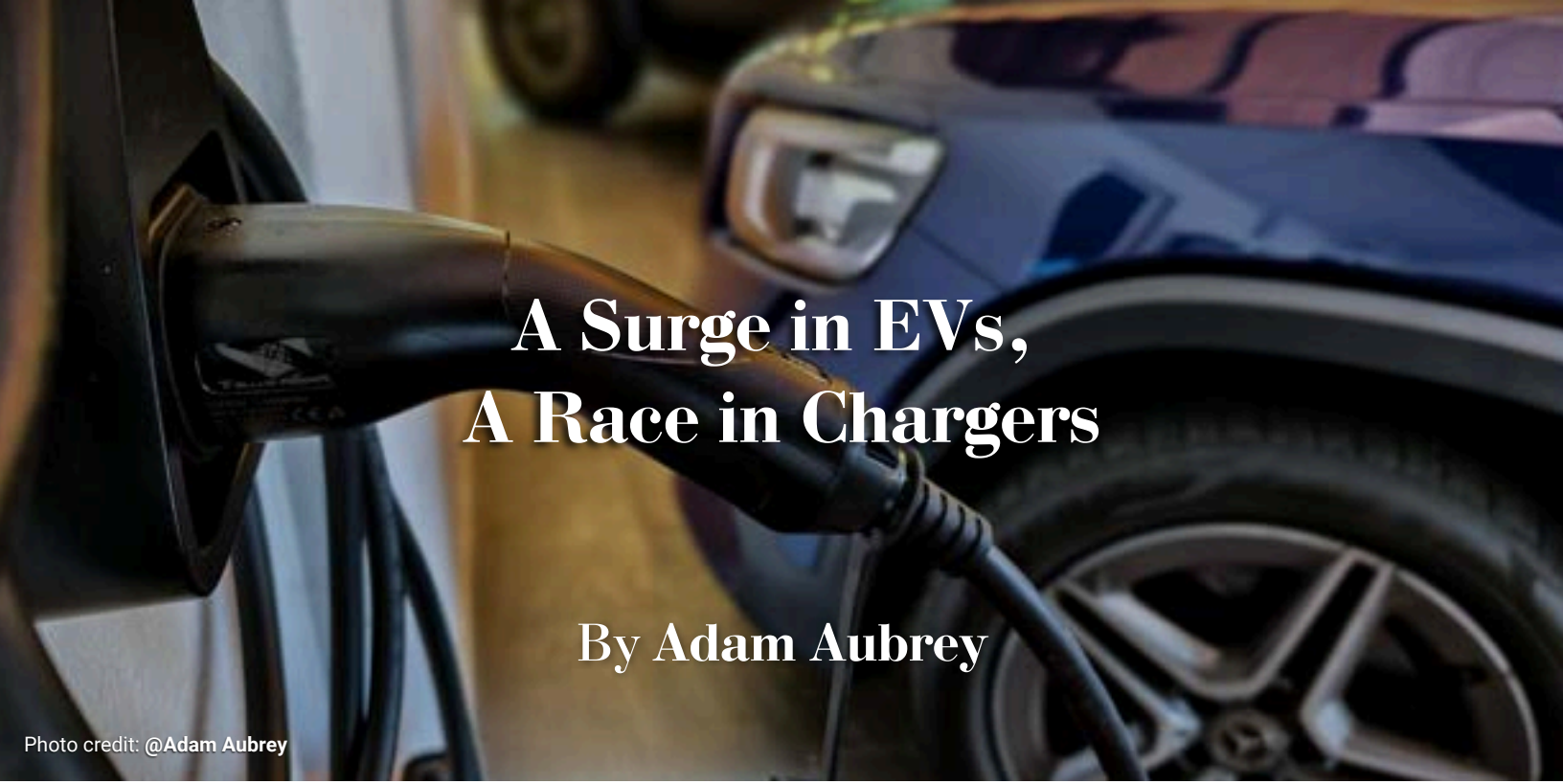
EURO NCAP
★★★★★
Test 2025

ANCAP
SAFETY
TESTED 2025
★★★★★

C-NCAP
★★★★★

TIGGO | CSH

Disclaimer: All NCAP test ratings are applicable solely to the specific vehicle model used in the testing.



A Surge in EVs, A Race in Chargers

By Adam Aubrey

Photo credit: @Adam Aubrey

If you've been watching Malaysia's EV scene lately, you'll know one thing for certain: we are no longer in the trial phase.

The data doesn't whisper; it shouts. Monthly BEV sales in 2025 were hovering between 3,000 and 4,000 units, with peaks like 4.2k in October 2025. That's a staggering leap from the days when a few hundred units were considered progress. And with more EVs on the road, one thing becomes painfully obvious — our charging etiquette needs to level up, fast.

To set the scene: as of late 2025, Malaysia had 5,149 public charging points, with over 1,700 DC fast chargers — most of them in Peninsular Malaysia.

A year ago, we only had around 3,354 chargers. That's good progress even though we're only half of the 2025 target to have 10,000 public charging points.

Highways now have DC hubs, shopping malls are installing them like they install bubble tea kiosks, and residential management bodies are finally waking up.

But even with this progress, the growth of chargers is racing to keep up with the sudden boom in EVs — which is why etiquette matters more than ever. Good chargers are shared resources, not personal garages.

The more crowded the ecosystem becomes, the more social rules matter.

So… What Exactly Is Good EV Charging Etiquette?

1. Park only if you're charging

A charging bay isn't a parking spot. If you're not plugged in, don't occupy it.

2. Move once you're done

DC chargers are for quick top-ups, not 0–100%. When you have enough charge, free the bay.

3. Charge full before leaving

If you're going on a long journey, charge 100% at home.

4. Leave cables neat

Return the connector properly. Messy cables are hazards and damage equipment.

5. Use the right charger

If your car can't fast-charge, don't hog a high-speed DC unit. Try to match the charger to your car.

6. Respect the queue

First come, first served. Simple.

7. A note goes a long way

Sharing your ETA or contact is optional, but thoughtful.

8. Leave space for other cars

Unfortunately charging ports are not universal in placement, try to be considerate of this.

As BEV sales climb monthly into the 3–4k range, Malaysia's EV ecosystem has entered a phase where infrastructure alone isn't enough. We can build chargers — and we are — but user behaviour will determine whether the system works smoothly or descends into chaos.

Just like how Malaysians learned to queue for Touch 'n Go top-up counters in the past, eventually we'll learn how to share chargers like civilised adults. But for now, education matters.

Charging etiquette is not a moral lecture — it's survival. It's what keeps journeys smooth, prevents parking-lot standoffs, reduces stress for new EV adopters, and ensures the ecosystem remains usable for everyone.

2025 is already the breakout year for EVs. Let 2026 be the breakout year for EV manners.

e.MAS7

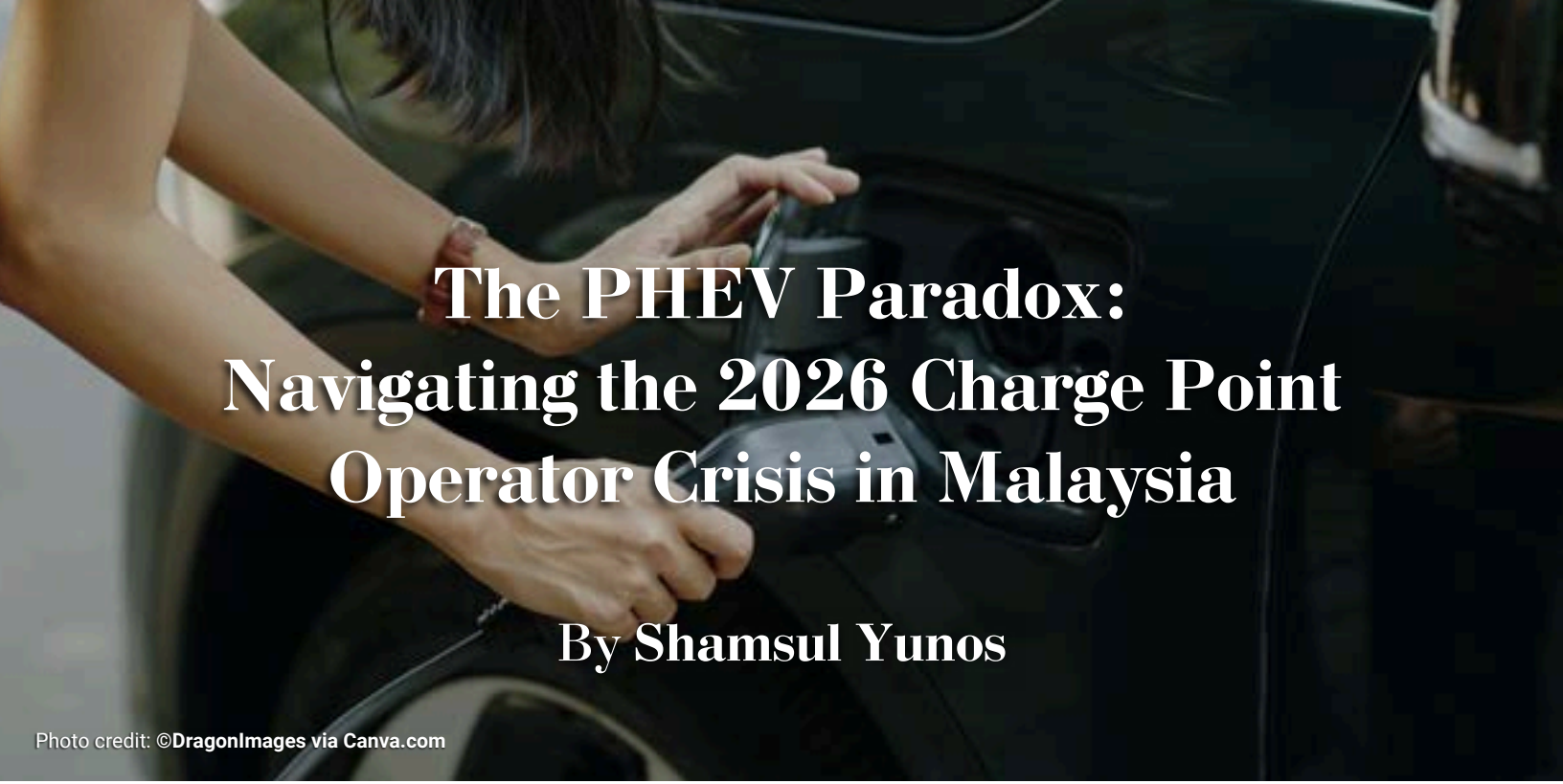
INTELLIGENCE THAT ELECTRIFIES™

NO.1 EV MODEL* IN MALAYSIA

PROTON e.MAS

Our Malaysian EV Journey Starts Here

EXPERIENCE THE FIRST NATIONAL EV



The PHEV Paradox: Navigating the 2026 Charge Point Operator Crisis in Malaysia

By **Shamsul Yunos**

Photo credit: ©DragonImages via Canva.com

As Malaysia enters 2026, the electric vehicle (EV) landscape is facing an unforeseen complication. For years, Charge Point Operators (CPOs) focused on a simple math problem: more Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) meant a greater need for more plugs. However, the rapid influx of affordable Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) from China—equipped with surprisingly large batteries and DC fast-charging capabilities—has thrown a wrench into that calculation. This "PHEV Paradox" is creating a unique set of logistical and social challenges that are forcing CPOs to rapidly evolve or risk alienating their most loyal customer base.

The Rise of the DC-Capable PHEV

Historically, PHEVs were the "slow chargers" of the world, often limited to AC speeds that made public charging almost pointless. But the 2026 crop of Chinese hybrids has changed the game. These vehicles now feature DC fast-charging ports, allowing them to juice up their 30–40kWh batteries in under 30 minutes.

Because these vehicles carry an internal combustion engine as a backup, their drivers They are increasingly willing to

First-Class Always

every seat, every journey, every time.

ZEEKR 009

embark on long interstate journeys, treating electricity as an "opportunistic" fuel. When they see a charger, they plug in to enjoy the lower cost per kilometer; when the charge points are already occupied, they simply burn petrol. This flexibility, while a boon for the owner, creates a significant bottleneck at highway charging hubs.

The Friction of "Choice vs. Necessity"

The core of the challenge lies in the shifting dynamics of the charging queue. A BEV driver pulling into a Tapah or Simpang Pulai rest stop is often there out of absolute necessity; without a charge, they are stranded. Conversely, a PHEV driver at the same station is there by choice.

In 2026, this has led to growing resentment. BEV owners, who are "captive" to the infrastructure, often find themselves waiting behind a row of PHEVs that could easily continue their journey on petrol. This friction isn't just a social issue; it’s a branding nightmare for CPOs. When a flagship charging site is perpetually occupied by "optional" users, the perceived reliability of the entire EV network for long-distance travel begins to crumble.

CPOs Under Pressure: Quality vs. Quantity

For CPOs, the surge in PHEV users is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it increases utilization rates and revenue. On the other, it exposes the inadequacy of the "two-gun" charging model that was standard during the early adoption phase.

In this new environment, a location with only two charging bays is no longer viable. A single PHEV and a single BEV can saturate the site, leaving the next three arriving vehicles in a queue that could last an hour. To remain competitive and keep the peace, CPOs in 2026 are being forced to "up their game." The industry standard is rapidly shifting toward high-density hubs.

Key strategic shifts for CPOs include:

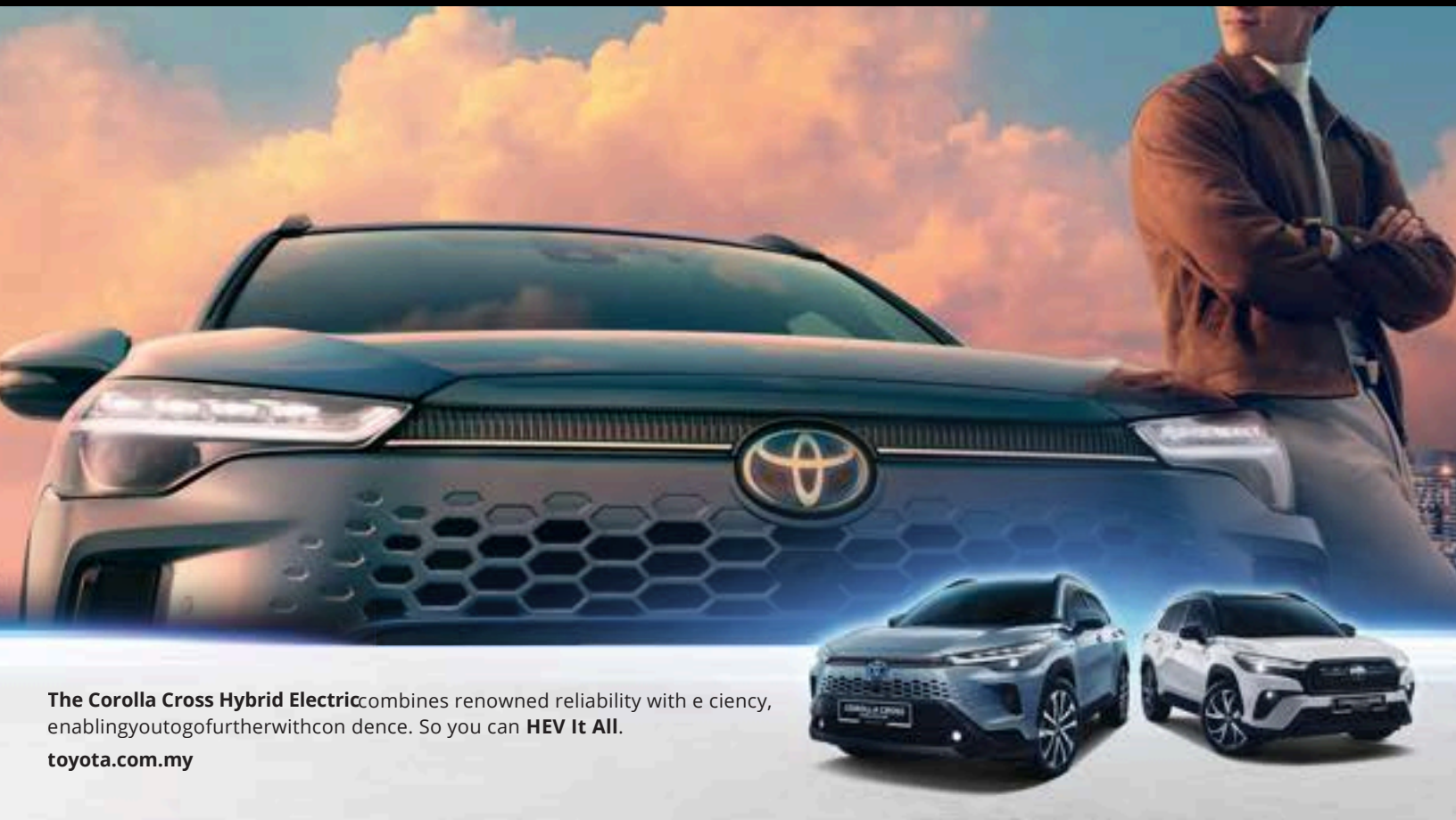
By bridging the gap between government policy and industry execution, MARii continues to future-proof Malaysia’s mobility sector. Through its focus on Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS), the institute ensures that Malaysian businesses and talent remain at the forefront of the global automotive arena.

COROLLA CROSS
HYBRID ELECTRIC

TOYOTA
Move your world

HEV IT ALL

QUALITY | DURABILITY | RELIABILITY



The Corolla Cross Hybrid Electric combines renowned reliability with e ciency, enablingyoutogofurtherwithcon dence. So you can **HEV It All**.

toyota.com.my

- **Expansion to Scale:** Retrofitting existing sites to offer a minimum of four to six charging bays. This allows for better "queue thinning" and ensures that a few PHEVs don't lock out the entire station.
- **Dynamic Power Sharing:** Implementing smart load balancing where a 180kW charger can split power across four cars simultaneously, giving everyone enough "juice" to move on, rather than giving 100% to one vehicle while others wait.
- **Congestion Pricing:** Many operators are now introducing tiered pricing or "overstay fees." By making the final 20% of a charge (which is the slowest) significantly more expensive, CPOs encourage PHEV drivers to unplug once they have a reasonable buffer, rather than hogging the bay to reach 100%.

The Path Forward

The year 2026 is proving that Malaysia's charging infrastructure cannot just grow; it must mature. The "PHEV invasion" is a litmus test for the resilience of the local grid and the efficiency of private operators. While the presence of hybrids on the highway adds pressure, it also proves that the demand for electric mobility is higher than ever.

For CPOs, the mandate is clear: the era of the lonely, twin-bay charger is over. To survive the 2026 transition, they must build for density, manage for etiquette, and ensure that the highway remains a viable corridor for all—regardless of whether they have a tailpipe or not.

Extending range of electric car with petrol option for long-distance
Photo credit: **©Shamsul Yunos**

THE ALL-NEW MAZDA CX-60

ELEGANCE THAT LEADS

INTERIOR REFINEMENT
Crafted for premium comfort and elevated with Bose® premium audio.

SPACE FOR MORE
Generous space for every journey, offering up to 1,726 litres of storage.

PLATFORM & DRIVETRAIN
Next-generation architecture with rear-wheel drive.

REFINED DRIVE
Kinematic Posture Control (KPC) improves stability in every corner, ensuring a smoother and more composed drive.

Prima Merdu / Bermaz

MAZDA.COM.MY | MAZDA.COM.MY/MAZDA-ANSHIN | MAZDA MY | MAZDA ZOOM-ZOOM LINE: 1800-22-8080

FRANCHISE HOLDER/IMPORTER: PRIMA MERDU SDN BHD 200801002202 (803486-M)
SOLE DISTRIBUTOR: BERMAZ MOTOR SDN BHD 198801006297 (173654-K)

*5 years manufacturer warranty and 5 years free scheduled maintenance, for first 100,000km or whichever comes first.
Terms & conditions apply. Images shown are for illustration purposes only, actual car may vary

5 YEARS WARRANTY
5 YEARS FREE MAINTENANCE
including labour, parts and lubricants*

Ergonomics, Accessibility and Ease of Use

By Lisa Kuok

Photo credit: ©**Lisa Kuok**

When did cars become so complicated? Ten years ago, you could get into most cars, adjust the seat and mirrors, put on the seatbelt and drive off. Aside from which side the indicators were on, the only immediate uncertainty might have been the location of the horn.

Air-conditioning controls came next but after a day or two, you no longer needed to look to adjust fan speed, temperature or airflow direction. Generally, guided by what felt like common sense, things were where you expected them to be.

Today, simply getting into a car can be more complicated than walking up to it, unlocking it and pulling a door handle.

In 2025, some cars had me standing by the kerb wondering how to get in. The Leapmotor C10, came with an NFC keycard that can only be tapped on the driver's side wing mirror to unlock the doors and tailgate.

There are no proximity sensors to unlock the car automatically as you approach. I ended up getting soaking wet trying to locate the sensor.

While a mobile phone app allows remote unlocking, Leapmotor explained that this function is limited to a single registered driver, set up by the dealer at the time of purchase.

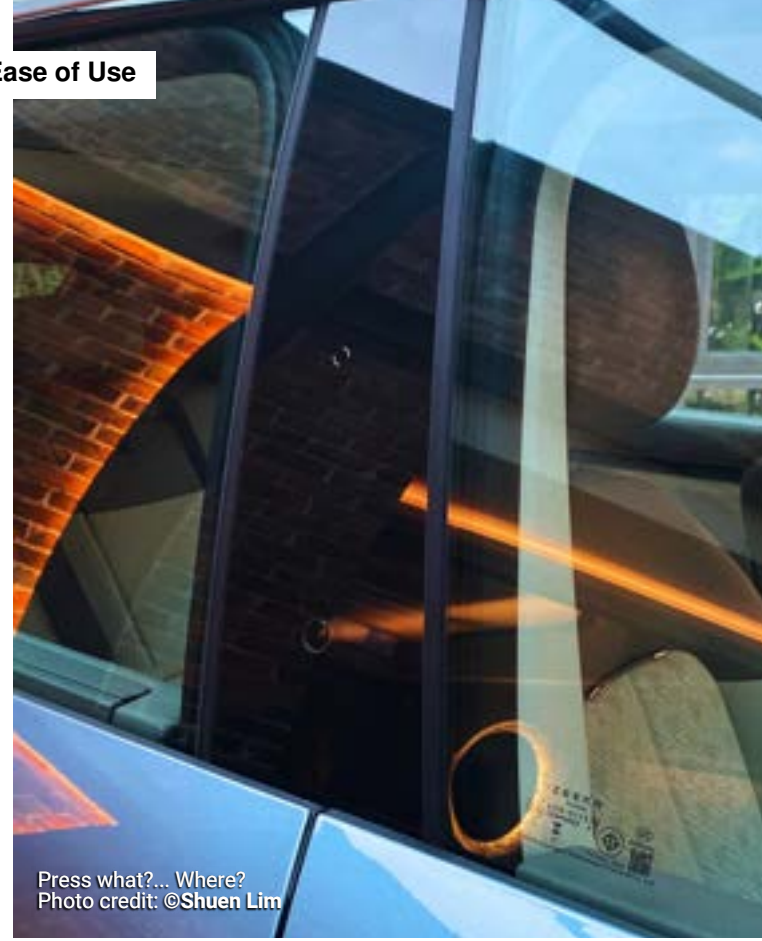
Another head-scratcher was the Zeekr 7X. Its flush-mounted door handles extend automatically as you approach but not have a door release latch. Instead, a capacitive sensor on the B-pillar - or the C-pillar for rear-seat passengers - must be pressed to open the motorised door.

Explaining this to every new passenger quickly became tiresome. My 91-year-old mother, however, loved it. The motorised doors allowed her to get in and out independently, without struggling with a heavy door or worrying about opening it into the neighbouring car.

Sensors detect obstacles and limit the door's opening angle if necessary. There are also mechanical door releases inside as a fail-safe.

Adjusting wing mirrors became another complicated exercise. Traditionally, the controls would be found on the driver's door, the dashboard or near the mirror.

Tap card at symbol to unlock door
Photo credit: ©**Lisa Kuok**



Press what?... Where?
Photo credit: ©**Shuen Lim**

Now, they may be in any of those places - or in the infotainment monitor - turning a once instinctive action into a treasure hunt.

"Infotainment monitor" has become an ironic moniker. Over the past four years, it has become more uninformative and less entertaining while assuming the role of primary interface between driver and vehicle.

Instead of simplifying interaction, the monitor feels like a digital blackhole in

which car manufacturers can place, now or later, any and every feature or control they lack, remember at the last minute, or didn't want in a physical interface for the car.

Almost any omission can now be addressed through an over-the-air (OTA) update.

Last year, BYD issued an OTA update for three-finger gestures on the infotainment screen to adjust air-conditioning and fan speed across BYD and Denza models.

Leapmotor added Apple CarPlay and Android Auto to the C10 via an OTA update a year after launch. Now, features can be modified, removed, or terms of use revised.

This digital-first approach has enabled sleek interiors with clean lines which look stylishly futuristic, but are minimalist to excess. Knobs, buttons, switches and dials that provide tactile or audible feedback have largely disappeared. In their place is a smooth touch-sensitive flat screen.

Many marques are reverting to physical knobs and switches for frequently used functions like air-conditioning
Photo credit: ©**Lisa Kuok**

It is a recipe for immense frustration when you try to select something on the screen and stabilise your hand without touching the pressure sensitive monitor – and triggering another function.

With access to so many features crammed into that touchscreen monitor, even basic adjustments require navigating layered menus while remembering their location and order.

Something as simple as redirecting airflow can take multiple steps whether this driver wants to redirect cold air, open the tailgate, or unlock the doors.

This is not a question of age. Who, at any age, would choose five steps to perform a task that could be done in one?

Interfaces now change from one vehicle generation to the next, sometimes even in the time it takes to bring out a facelift.

In a recent midlife refresh, the eighth-generation Volkswagen Golf GTI replaced its touch-sensitive controls with physical buttons.

So here's to all the user-unfriendly interfaces in every car: may they be fixed in a soon-to-come OTA update.

Automotive Awards Categories

Auto Ecosystem Awards Categories

HALL OF FAME RFCGF 2025

Who will be the leading contenders for 2026?

For the Bravest of the Land Daredevils RFC 2026
World's No.3 of Top 5 Toughest Off Road Races

27 NOV – 6 DEC

RAINFOREST CHALLENGE
RFC 29 YEARS
2026
A Luis J.A Wee Presentation

RFC GLOBAL SERIES

PETRONAS Urania

PETRONAS DYNAMIC DIESEL EURO 5

MALAYSIA MADANI

R2 CHAMPION
Team 107

R2 1ST RUNNER UP
Team 166

1ST RUNNER UP
Team 101

R3 CHAMPION
Team 102

R3 1ST RUNNER UP
Team 111

2ND RUNNER UP
Team 128

R3 2ND RUNNER UP
Team 177

WINNER DIESEL
Team 114

Contact RFC International: 012 211 4107 / 019 312 7083 / 012 211 7080 (www.rfc-global.com)

Pix credits: Nazari POB, Agustinus ATM, Ho Ka, Chamchai Petchin, David Chin

RFC International Secretariat
Website: www.rfc-global.com
Tel: Ami +60 12-211 4107 / +6012-211 7080 / +019 312 7083 • Email: rfcwee@gmail.com / info@rfc-global.com / luis@rfc-global.com • Instagram @ rfcglobalseries (rainforest challenge) / @luisjawee / Facebook: rainforest challenge / Luis Wee / Luis Wee II / Rainforest Challenge International / RFC Global Series

China Moves to Rein in EV Excesses, Reshaping Global Car Safety Standards

By Yamin Vong

Photo credit: ©Niphon Subsri via Canva.com

As the world's largest automaker—and by far its biggest producer and exporter of electric vehicles—China is now actively defining not only how cars are built but also the future of automotive safety standards.

The recent enactment of new vehicle safety rules by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) marks a decisive policy shift. The regulations explicitly curb extreme electric vehicle performance, mandate stricter door design requirements, and impose clearer limits on advanced driver-assistance systems—technologies that have often outpaced consumer awareness.

These rules are significant both in their concrete measures and in their broader intent. At a time when EV acceleration grows ever more extreme and automotive design increasingly prioritizes aesthetics, China has moved decisively to recalibrate the balance between innovation and safety. This recalibration carries implications that will resonate across global markets.

The move aligns with observations from motor insurers in markets like the United States, where a notable portion of EV crashes is attributed to driver unfamiliarity with the instant, high-torque acceleration unique to electric powertrains.

A cornerstone of the new regime is a mandatory cap on default acceleration. Under the official rules, all new vehicles sold in China must now start in a driving mode that limits 0–100 km/h acceleration to five seconds or slower. While faster performance modes remain available and legal for use on public roads, drivers must now make a conscious, active selection to engage them.

It is a response to a uniquely modern problem. Electric drivetrains deliver instant torque, allowing even modestly priced family cars to achieve supercar-level acceleration. What was once rarefied performance has been democratised — and, regulators fear, normalised on public roads.

The concern is not speed per se, but surprise. Faster cars reduce reaction time, magnify driver error, and amplify the consequences of pedal misapplication — a frequent cause of so-called "unintended acceleration" incidents. The new rules would also mandate pedal-misapplication warnings and automatic power cut-off systems when incorrect inputs are detected.

China's approach is pragmatic rather than prohibitive. Drivers are not banned from accessing performance but are nudged toward safer defaults — a model that acknowledges human behaviour as much as vehicle capability.

Beyond acceleration, the regulations tackle one of the EV era's most controversial design trends: flush, electronically actuated door handles. Popularised by Tesla and now widely adopted across Chinese and global EV brands, these handles are cheaper to make, improve aerodynamics and aesthetics but have drawn scrutiny for their frequent failures in crashes, especially when power is shut down to avoid short circuits of the high voltage system.

Under China's new rules, every occupant must be able to exit through at least two doors, all doors must have clearly accessible mechanical releases inside and out, and vehicles must automatically unlock in emergencies. These requirements go directly to post-crash survivability — an area where design minimalism can have fatal consequences.

China's National Vehicle In-depth Investigation System (NAIS) reportedly found that vehicles with electronic door handles opened successfully after side collisions only about 67% of the time, compared with 98% for mechanical handles in standardized tests.

The issue has attracted global attention following investigations by Bloomberg, which documented at least 15 deaths in the United States over the past decade in crashes where occupants or rescuers

struggled to open doors of EVs after power failure. While these cases represent a small fraction of fatal EV accidents, their frequency has increased sharply since late 2024.

The pattern is consistent: a crash disables the low-voltage system, electronic handles fail, and manual releases — often inconsistently located or poorly labelled — are difficult to find under stress.

Chinese regulators appear determined to eliminate ambiguity altogether. Mechanical redundancy, not software elegance, is the guiding principle. The third pillar of the rules addresses advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), an area plagued by confusing branding and inflated expectations. Drivers would be required to verify that they have completed training on the limitations of a specific system — using biometrics or account login — before being allowed to activate it. Continuous driver-attention monitoring, including both hand and eye detection, would also be mandatory.

The aim is to counter the dangerous belief that some cars can "drive themselves". As systems grow more capable but remain fundamentally assistive, regulators are insisting that responsibility remains unmistakably human.

Institutionally, the proposals reflect a coordinated effort across Chinese

“The aim is to counter the dangerous belief that some cars can “drive themselves”. As systems grow more capable but remain fundamentally assistive, regulators are insisting that responsibility remains unmistakably human.”

authorities. While the Ministry of Public Security oversees traffic safety and enforcement, vehicle design and technical standards fall under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), which drafts China's mandatory national "GB" (Gui Biao means National Standards). Together, they are shaping a safety framework that aligns engineering, regulation and real-world behaviour.

Taken as a whole, the regulations mark a maturation of China's automotive industry. Having mastered scale, cost and electrification, it is now asserting leadership on safety — addressing problems created by the very technologies it helped popularise.

China's primary vehicle safety assessment programme, C-NCAP, is managed by the China Automotive Technology and Research Centre (CATARC). It is complemented by the insurance industry's C-IASI. Together, they play a crucial role in promoting vehicle safety standards in the Chinese market, like how the U.S. has NHTSA's NCAP and IIHS.

As for car buyers in Malaysia who are guided by the star ratings of the ASEAN NCAP, it must be noted that some Chinese car importers could be more open on their cars' safety standards. Occupant safety is a major concern for buyers of family cars and more transparency in safety standards will help sell cars.

China's car safety assessment program, C-NAP, is managed by the government-linked CATARC
Photo credit: ©**Europe.Catarctc.com**

SUV OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 200,000

NOMINEES

BYD **Sealion 7 Performance**

Hyundai **Santa Fe 2.2 Turbo Diesel Max**

Hyundai **Tucson Prestige 1.6T-GDi AWD**

iCaur **03 iWD**

JAECOO **J8 AWD**

KIA **Sportage 1.6T AWD**

Omoda **C9 AWD**

Xpeng **G6 Facelift AWD Performance**

Zeekr **X AWD**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

JAECOO J8 AWD

SUV OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 200,000

JAECOO J8 AWD

By **Lisa Kuok**

The Jaecoo J8 AWD is a six-seater premium SUV. It packs strong turbocharged performance, all-wheel-drive capability, seven drive modes, refined ride and handling, comprehensive safety technology a luxurious, ergonomic interior with dual 12.3″ screens and 14-speaker premium audio system within its stylish exterior. There are Captain Seats with ventilation, heating, massage and memory function for the second row passengers.

The continuous damping control gives the handling quality and passenger comfort of a much more expensive car. The Advanced Driver Assistance System safety features are the highest levels available at the time of launch in Malaysia. The J8 AWD has comfort, refinement and technological sophistication that belies its price.

NOMINEES

Audi **Q7 2025**

BMW **G45 X3 20xDrive M**

BMW **iX xDrive 45 Sport**

BMW i**X xDrive 60 M Sport Pro**

BMW **X5 xDrive40i M Sport**

Hyundai **Santa Fe 2.5 T-GDi HTRAC Calligraphy**

Lexus **RX 500h F Sport Special Edition**

Mazda **CX-80**

Mercedes-Benz **GLC350e 4Matic AMG Line**

Mercedes-Benz **GLC350e Coupe**

SUV OF THE YEAR

RM 200,000 - RM 500,000

Mercedes-Benz **GLC43 Coupe**

Mini **Countryman S All4**

Porsche **Macan EV**

Subaru **Forester 2.5i-S EyeSight**

Subaru **Outback 2.4 XT**

Subaru **Outback 2.5i-T**

Tesla **Model Y Juniper LR AWD**

Volvo **EX30 Ultra Twin Performance**

Volvo **EX90**

Volvo **XC90 Ultra T8**

Zeekr **7X AWD Performance**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

ZEEKR 7X AWD PERFORMANCE

SUV OF THE YEAR

RM 200,000 - RM 500,000

ZEEKR 7X AWD PERFORMANCE

By Chips Yap

While the Zeekr 7X Performance was among the many new EVs introduced in Malaysia in 2025, it stands out not just for its advanced EV technologies but also performance that is sportscar-rivalling, with a premium cabin for the family.

Being part of the Geely group is advantageous as Zeekr can share extensive technological resources from other brands. But the technology in the 7X Performance isn't just a list of features; it's a cohesive ecosystem designed for speed and intelligence. At its core is a full-stack 800V high-voltage architecture with dual motors producing an impressive 475 kW (646 hp) and 710 Nm of torque output.

The NMC Qilin battery has a 100 kWh capacity – larger than average for current EVs – which can provide up to 543 kms of range. The 800V architecture makes it possible for faster charging times with greater power supply. Within 16 minutes, the battery can be recharged from 10% to 80% (at maximum 420 kW DC power supply). Even with AC power supply at a maximum of 22 kW, it takes only 5.5 hours from 0% to 100%.

Apart from being a benchmark EV, the 7X Performance is also able to handle off-road driving with its tough engineering. Sophisticated Magic Carpet air suspension and active damping control ensure a comfortable ride across diverse terrain. Variable ride height up to 230 mm also enhances off-road capability.

Within the 7X Performance, the cabin shows intelligent 'Human Touch' design. Unlike minimalist rivals that feel clinical, the 7X says 'premium' on nearly every surface with nappa leather and soft-touch materials. It isn't just a mere cabin but a hospitality space on wheels.

With the 7X Performance, Geely's premium EV brand that has only been in existence since 2021, has developed an SUV that will satisfy the enthusiast driver and also provide comfortable and satisfying journeys for all the family. It is, quite simply, an EV that can be the benchmark for others.

SUV OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 500,000

NOMINEES

Land Rover **Defender V8 110**

Land Rover **Defender V8 130**

Mercedes-AMG **GLE 63**

Mercedes-AMG **GLE63s Coupe**

Mercedes-AMG **G63**

Mercedes-Benz **EQS450 4Matic**

Mercedes-Benz **G580 EQ Tech**

Mercedes-Maybach **EQS 680**

Porsche **Macan Turbo EV**

Porsche **2025 Cayenne S E-Hybrid (Facelift)**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PORSCHE MACAN TURBO EV

SUV OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 500,000

PORSCHE MACAN TURBO EV

By Chips Yap

The transition from ICE (internal combustion engine) to fully electric power often carries the stigma of losing 'soul'. This is especially so with sportscars but the Porsche Macan Turbo EV proves that the Stuttgart crest can still be used on an EV yet retaining all the famous sporting qualities of the brand.

This is not just a high-performance SUV, thanks to the Premium Platform Electric (PPE) architecture developed by Porsche and Audi. With 800V architecture, the Macan Turbo supports DC fast charging at up to 270 kW. In ideal conditions, you can recharge the 100-kWh battery from 10% to 80% in approximately 21 minutes. A range potential of up to 591 kms effectively kills range anxiety, making longer trips not just possible, but less stressful.

Performance-wise, an EV already offers sizzling acceleration and Porsche engineers have used that to full advantage. In fact, with the dual-motor all-wheel drive system and Launch Control, the Macan Turbo is faster than many of Porsche's own 911 models from recent years.

What truly sets the Macan Turbo apart, however, is its poise. Porsche has integrated Active Suspension Management with new two-valve dampers and adaptive air suspension as standard.

This set-up allows the SUV to transition from a cruiser to a razor-sharp apex-hunter at the flick of a dial. Combined with optional rear-axle steering and Porsche Torque Vectoring Plus, the Macan Turbo defies the physics of its weight, offering a level of agility that makes it the definitive benchmark for handling in the electric SUV segment.

Inside, the Macan Turbo EV balances digital innovation with the tactile ergonomics Porsche drivers have long appreciated. The Porsche Driver Experience introduces a curved 12.6-inch digital instrument cluster and a 10.9-inch central touchscreen, but the real star is the Augmented Reality Head-Up Display. It projects navigation cues directly onto the road ahead, blending the digital and physical worlds seamlessly.

Like virtually every Porsche past and present, the Macan Turbo EV is a triumph of engineering. It manages to preserve the visceral Porsche feel - that telepathic steering and relentless build quality - while embracing the silent, instantaneous future of electrification. It isn't just a great EV; it's a great Porsche.

CROSSOVER ICE OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 120,000

NOMINEES

Chery **Tiggo Cross 1.5 Turbo**

Chery **O5**

GAC **GS3 Emzoom Exclusive**

JETOUR **Dashing Prime**

Proton **X50 1.5TD Flagship**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PROTON X50 1.5TD FLAGSHIP

CROSSOVER ICE OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 120,000

PROTON X50 1.5TD FLAGSHIP

By Tee Yee Chieng

The all-new Proton X50 brings added excitement to daily driving with its sharper styling and stronger performance. It is powered by a new 1.5L i-GT four-cylinder turbocharged engine paired with a 7-speed DCT, delivering 181PS and 290Nm, while cutting the 0–100 km/h sprint time by 0.3 seconds over the previous model. An Adaptive Drive Mode further improves usability by automatically adjusting vehicle responses to suit the driver's driving style.

Inside, the cabin is equipped with a comprehensive suite of modern technologies, while the Flagship variant adds a semi-transparent sunshade better suited to Malaysia's hot climate. Safety is equally impressive, with the Flagship variant featuring Level 2 ADAS as well as a parking assist system. Altogether, the X50 stands out as a well-rounded B-segment SUV offering strong performance, smart features and excellent value for money

CROSSOVER ICE OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 120,000

NOMINEES

GAC **Emkoo Premium Pro**

Hyundai **Tucson Style G2.0 MPi**

JAECOO **J8 2WD**

JETOUR **VT9 Prime**

KIA **Sportage 2.0G 2WD**

Mazda **CX-60**

MG **HS Lux**

OMODA **C9 2WD**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

JAECOO J8 2WD

CROSSOVER ICE OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 120,000

JAECOO J8 2WD

By **Shamsul Yunus**

The Malaysian automotive landscape witnessed a significant shift in 2025 as the Jaecoo J8 2WD claimed its title as a category winner in the Family SUV segment. Traditionally dominated by established Japanese and Continental players, the J8's victory signals a new era where "attainable luxury" is no longer a marketing buzzword, but a tangible reality for Malaysian households.

A Powerhouse of Efficiency and Space

At the heart of the Jaecoo J8 is a 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine, delivering a robust 249 hp and 385 Nm of torque. Paired with a smooth 8-speed automatic transmission, the 2WD variant was specifically lauded for its urban refinement and fuel efficiency—key priorities for the modern family. However, it is the vehicle's dimensions that truly set it apart. Built on a generous 2,820mm wheelbase, the J8 offers a cavernous interior that prioritizes passenger comfort without compromising on utility. With a standard boot capacity of 738 liters, extending to over 2,000 liters with the seats folded, it handles school runs, grocery hauls, and cross-country road trips with ease.

The "First-Class" Family Cabin

The primary reason the J8 secured its win lies in its interior execution. Judges were impressed by the "Queen's Seat"—a front passenger throne equipped with an electric leg rest and massage functions, features typically reserved for vehicles costing twice as much. The dashboard is dominated by a stunning 24.6-inch integrated curved screen, powered by a high-speed Qualcomm Snapdragon chip, ensuring that navigation and entertainment are seamless.

Safety as a Priority

For family buyers, safety is non-negotiable. While the J8 hasn't got an NCAP rating yet, it's suite of active and passive safety takes it to Level 2.5 in the Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) USA. A high ADAS like L2.5 typically leads to good NCAP ratings. This technological shield, combined with its premium build quality, earned the J8 the highest marks for family security. By blending D-segment luxury with C-segment pricing (starting at approximately RM178,800), the Jaecoo J8 2WD has proven itself as the ultimate choice for the discerning Malaysian family.

CROSSOVER xEV OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 120,000

NOMINEES

Chery **Tiggo Cross 1.5 Hybrid CSH**

Proton **e.Mas 5 Premium**

Proton **e.Mas 7 Premium**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

CHERY TIGGO CROSS 1.5 HYBRID CSH

CROSSOVER xEV OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 120,000

CHERY TIGGO CROSS 1.5 HYBRID CSH

By **Zachary Ho**

As Malaysia moves toward a net-zero-carbon future, as outlined in the National Energy Transition Roadmap, the reality on the ground remains: charging infrastructure is still uneven, and fully electric vehicles are not yet a universal solution. In this transition phase, consumers need technologies that balance national ambition with everyday usability. While battery electric vehicles continue to dominate the conversation, the Chery Tiggo Cross Hybrid demonstrates that meaningful decarbonisation can also be achieved through pragmatic, immediately deployable solutions.

Beyond its positioning as an affordable hybrid, the Tiggo Cross Hybrid contributes meaningfully to Malaysia's automotive ecosystem through localised xEV assembly, supporting domestic industrial development and capability building.

Powering the vehicle is Chery's 5th-generation Super Hybrid system, delivering 204 PS and 310 Nm of torque via a Dedicated Hybrid Transmission engineered for up to 98% mechanical efficiency. Paired with a 1.83 kWh LFP battery, the system effectively removes range and charging anxiety, offering a 0–100 km/h time of 8.9 seconds alongside real-world fuel consumption of 5.4 L/100 km and a total driving range of up to 1,000 km.

Priced at RM99,800, the Tiggo Cross Hybrid makes advanced electrified technology accessible to the mass market. It is particularly well suited to urban buyers without access to home charging, delivering a genuinely no-compromise ownership experience. Standard equipment is comprehensive for the segment, including an ADAS 2.5 suite with adaptive cruise control and traffic jam assist, panoramic view cameras, electric seat adjustment, and seven airbags.

By bridging internal combustion and full electrification, the Chery Tiggo Cross Hybrid redefines what an entry-level xEV can be. It is a compelling example of how Malaysia's energy transition can move forward—practically, inclusively, and without requiring drivers to plan their lives around a charging map.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

NOMINEES

BYD **Sealion 7 Premium**

Chery **TIGGO 7 PHEV**

Chery **TIGGO 8 PHEV**

GWM **Haval H6 HEV**

Hyundai **Santa Fe 1.6 Turbo Hybrid Max**

Hyundai **Santa Fe HEV Prestige**

JAECOO **J7 PHEV**

CROSSOVER xEV OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 120,000

LeapMotor **C10**

MG **S5 EV Lux Long Range**

Nissan **Kicks e-Power VLT**

Tesla **Model Y Juniper RWD**

Volvo **EX30 Ultra**

Zeekr **7X RWD Long Range**

Zeekr **7X RWD Standard Range**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

JAECOO J7 PHEV

CROSSOVER xEV OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 120,000

JAECOO J7 PHEV

By **Datuk Dr Teoh Siang Chin**

The Jaecoo J7 PHEV stands out as the deserving winner of the 2025 Malaysia Car of the Year (COTY) award in the Crossover category, offering exceptional value, advanced electrified technology, and premium features within an accessible price bracket. The J7 PHEV successfully redefines expectations for plug-in hybrid crossovers by combining efficiency, performance, and practicality in a highly attractive package.

At the heart of the J7 PHEV is Jaecoo's Super Hybrid System, pairing a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine with an electric motor to deliver an impressive, combined output of 347PS and 525Nm of torque. This setup provides strong driving performance with a remarkable fuel efficiency of approximately 4.77L/100km. The model further enhances usability with an electric-only driving range of up to 106km and a total combined range of approximately 1,300km, making it highly suitable for both daily urban commuting and long-distance travel.

Beyond performance, the J7 PHEV appeals with its advanced safety and convenience technologies, including Level 2.5 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, premium infotainment features, and comprehensive warranty coverage. These attributes significantly elevate the ownership experience while reinforcing consumer confidence in electrified mobility.

The model's competitive pricing, innovative hybrid technology, and comprehensive feature offerings, positions the Jaecoo J7 PHEV as a benchmark-setting crossover, making it a worthy recipient of the 2025 COTY recognition in its segment.

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 150,000

NOMINEES

BYD **Seal 6 Premium**

GAC **Aion ES EV**

MG **5**

Proton **Saga 1.5 Premium CVT**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PROTON SAGA 1.5 PREMIUM CVT

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

BELOW RM 150,000

PROTON SAGA 1.5 PREMIUM

By **Lisa Kuok**

The fourth-generation Proton Saga 1.5 Premium is a re-engineered new car which is now also one of the safest and most generously specced cars in its category, while remaining at an affordable price. Most significant is the new more fuel-efficient engine. The other updates include the exterior styling with new front grille, front and rear LED illuminations, redesigned interior styling, improved ride and handling, enhanced Noise Vibration Harshness buffering and Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) Level 1 safety features.

The plain but practical interior provide comfort and convenience for daily driving. At its price, it offers exceptional value for Malaysian buyers as an affordable, safe and capable sedan.

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

RM 150,000 - RM 500,000

NOMINEES

BMW **520i M Sport**

Mercedes-Benz **E200 Avantgarde**

Mercedes-Benz **E350e AMG Line**

Toyota **Camry XV80**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

TOYOTA CAMRY XV80

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

RM 150,000 - RM 500,000

TOYOTA CAMRY XV80

By **Zachary Ho**

In a segment some brands have relinquished, Toyota has doubled down and redefined the rules. The ninth-generation Camry arrives exclusively as a hybrid; its wide-track stance and sharp 'hammerhead' design announce an executive presence while delivering a class-leading 4.0 L/100 km efficiency and just 91 g/km of CO_2 emissions.

Leveraging Toyota's "multi-pathway" approach, the Camry is fitted with a 5th-generation Hybrid System that dispatches a brisk century sprint in 7.2s while delivering a driving range of up to 1,200 km — no plugs, no waiting, no compromise.

By making this executive icon independent of EV charging infrastructure, Toyota hands Malaysia an immediately scalable lever for transport decarbonisation, synchronising perfectly with the National Energy Transition

Roadmap (NETR) and the country's 2050 carbon neutral ambition. In an SUV-obsessed era, the Camry proves the executive sedan can still turn heads — and lead the charge to a low-carbon future.

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 500,000

NOMINEES

BMW **M2**

BMW **M4 Competition xDrive**

BMW **M5 PHEV**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

BMW M2

SEDAN OF THE YEAR

ABOVE RM 500,000

BMW M2

By **Zachary Ho**

The updated G87-generation BMW M2 stands as a focused expression of BMW M's driver-first philosophy, proving that compact performance coupes still have a vital place in today's evolving automotive landscape. Retaining its wide-track stance and muscular proportions, the M2 combines purposeful design with a modern, driver-oriented cockpit centred around BMW's Curved Display and a flat-bottomed M steering wheel, reinforcing its connection between car and driver.

At its core is the renowned S58 3.0-litre twin-turbocharged inline-six, now delivering 480PS and up to 600Nm of torque through an eight-speed M Steptronic transmission. The result is immediate, controllable performance, with a 0–100 km/h sprint of just 4.0 seconds. Power is sent exclusively to the rear wheels, supported by an Active M Differential and adaptive M suspension, giving the M2 the balance, precision and feedback that define an engaging performance car.

Crucially, the M2's appeal extends beyond outright speed. Its well-judged ride compliance, premium cabin appointments and everyday drivability make it as usable on daily roads as it is rewarding on a challenging stretch of tarmac.

In an era increasingly shaped by electrification and larger body styles, the BMW M2 remains a purist's machine — one that delivers authentic driver engagement, mechanical character and the enduring essence of BMW's "Sheer Driving Pleasure."

MPV xEV OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

BYD **M6 Extended**

Denza **D9 AWD**

Mercedes-Benz **EQV300 Avantgarde**

XPENG **X9 LR 2WD Pro Plus**

Zeekr **009 Ultra Luxury**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

ZEEKR 009 ULTRA LUXURY

MPV xEV OF THE YEAR

ZEEKR 009 ULTRA LUXURY

Ultra Luxury: The New Benchmark for Executive Mobility

By **Shamsul Yunus**

The Premium MPV category has long been the fortress of traditional luxury vans, but the Zeekr 009 Ultra Luxury has officially breached those walls. By winning the 2025 category title, the 009 has proven that the future of executive transport is not just electric—it is revolutionary. This victory marks a turning point in Malaysia, where the elite are now choosing silent, sustainable power over internal combustion.

Performance Meets Silence

The Zeekr 009 is built on an advanced 800V architecture, allowing for incredibly fast charging—moving from 10% to 80% in just 30 minutes. Its dual-motor AWD system produces a staggering 603 hp, enabling this massive MPV to sprint from 0–100 km/h in just 4.5 seconds. While the speed is impressive, the win was secured by the refinement of its delivery. The 009 utilizes a dual-chamber air suspension system with electromagnetic damping, creating a "magic carpet" ride that isolates passengers from the imperfections of Malaysian roads.

An Ultra-Luxury Sanctuary

The "Ultra Luxury" moniker is best reflected in the rear cabin. The 009 features Sofaro first-class aeronautical seats, upholstered in Nappa leather and featuring independent heating, ventilation, and pressure-point massage functions. This is not merely a car; it is a mobile boardroom. A 17-inch 3K OLED ceiling-mounted screen provides entertainment or video conferencing capabilities, while a 30-speaker Yamaha surround sound system—including speakers integrated into the headrests—creates an immersive acoustic environment.

The Ultimate Statement

Beyond the specs, the Zeekr 009 won because it challenges the status quo. It offers a 582 km (WLTP) range, effectively eliminating range anxiety for interstate travel between Kuala Lumpur and Penang or Singapore. With its futuristic "Pantheon" grille and "Smart Bar" touch-sensitive door displays, the 009 provides a level of digital sophistication that its competitors simply cannot match. For the premium buyer, it represents the perfect fusion of high-performance engineering and unparalleled passenger indulgence.

MPV ICE OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Hyundai **Staria 2.2 CRDi Prestige 7-seater**

Toyota **Alphard**

Toyota **Vellfire**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

HYUNDAI STARIA 2.2 CRDI PRESTIGE 7-SEATER

MPV ICE OF THE YEAR

HYUNDAI STARIA 2.2 CRDi PRESTIGE 7-SEATER

By **Gogulakannan Kandiah**

The MPV (ICE) of the Year at the Malaysia Car of the Year (MCOTY) 2025 was awarded to the 2025 Hyundai Staria, a model that redefines expectations in its segment through progressive design, outstanding practicality and a compelling ownership proposition.

Its striking, futuristic exterior is complemented by a thoughtfully engineered interior that delivers exceptional spatial efficiency, intuitive ergonomics and true multi-purpose versatility for both family and executive use. Propelled by a powerful, durable and well-proven internal combustion powertrain, the Staria offers the performance and long-term reliability demanded in real-world Malaysian operating conditions.

Equally significant is the strong customer support framework from Hyundai Motor Malaysia, which enhances overall ownership confidence. This is further elevated by one of the most comprehensive warranty packages in its class, at eight years or 160,000 kilometres. In totality, the Hyundai Staria sets a new benchmark for the modern MPV, making it the clear and deserving winner in its category.

PICK-UP TRUCK OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Ford **Wildtrak 3.0 V6 Turbo Diesel**

JAC **T9 Diesel**

JAC **T9 EV**

Mazda **BT-50 3.0 D High Plus Facelift**

Mitsubishi **Triton Athlete**

Nissan **Navara X-Tremer 2.5 Turbo Pro-4X**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

FORD RANGER WILDTRAK 3.0 V6 DIESEL

PICK-UP TRUCK OF THE YEAR

FORD RANGER WILDTRAK 3.0 V6 DIESEL

By **Yamin Vong**

Emerging victorious over nine strong nominees, the Ford Ranger Wildtrak 3.0 V6 Diesel secures the Pick-up Truck of the Year 2025 title by redefining what a modern lifestyle pick-up can deliver.

Among the enthusiast community, this model was a highly anticipated successor to Ford's earlier V6 petrol-powered supertruck offering—and it has satisfied expectations in many meaningful way.

At the heart of the Wildtrak is a civilised 3.0-litre V6 turbo-diesel engine that delivers abundant torque, seamlessly managed by a refined 10-speed automatic transmission. The result is effortless performance, with 0–100 km/h acceleration that is remarkably smooth and progressive—almost electric in its delivery—on highways.

A standout feature is Ford's intelligent 4x4 system with its unique 4A (Automatic) mode.

This allows the drivetrain to continuously and automatically vary torque to the front wheels, providing optimal traction without driver intervention. It is a system that works transparently in the background, enhancing confidence across changing roads and sandy beaches.

Beyond performance and technology, the Wildtrak V6 Diesel also makes a compelling value proposition. Priced a shade below RM200,000, it delivers premium powertrain sophistication and advanced drivetrain capability.

With its blend of power, refinement, innovation and value, the Ford Ranger Wildtrak 3.0 V6 Diesel sets a new benchmark and rightfully earns its place as Pick-up Truck of the Year 2025.

HATCHBACK OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Dong Feng **Box EV E3**

Mazda **3 1.5L High Plus**

Proton **e.Mas 5 Premium**

Toyota **2025 GR Yaris AT**

Mini **Aceman SE**

Mini **F67 Convertible**

Mini **JCW 3-Door Electric**

Mini **JCW 3-Door Petrol**

Mini **JCW Aceman**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

MINI ACEMAN SE

HATCHBACK OF THE YEAR

MINI ACEMAN SE

By **Adam Aubrey**

The MINI Aceman SE takes Hatchback of the Year 2025 by doing something not many cars can manage, it feels properly fresh without forgetting how to be fun. It's compact and city-smart, yet it has the confidence and polish of something a size up, with that unmistakable MINI sense of mischief baked into the way it looks, responds, and goes about daily life.

Crucially, the Aceman is MINI's first purpose-built, all-electric crossover and their first model designed exclusively as an EV from the ground up, and you can feel the benefits in the packaging, the stance, and the way the whole thing drives like a cohesive idea rather than a retrofit.

It's sharp enough to entertain, refined enough to live with, and distinctive enough that you don't lose it in a sea of "generic EV shapes" in the mall car park.

In short, it's the kind of hatchback that turns a simple errand run into a "since we're already out…" loop around your favourite roads, and then has the cheek to call it efficiency.

That blend of character, usability, and EV intent is exactly why it earns this year's trophy.

PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Aston Martin **Vanquish (Coupe)**

Bentley **Continental GT Speed (GT)**

Bentley **2025 Flying Spur Speed (GT)**

Ferrari **12Cilindri (Coupe)**

Lotus **Emeya R (GT)**

McLaren **Artura Spider (Coupe)**

Mercedes Benz **CLE53 4Matic+ Coupe**

MG **Cyberster (Roadster)**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

MG CYBERSTER (ROADSTER)

PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

MG CYBERSTER (ROADSTER)

Theatre, Technology, and a Question of Sporting Soul

By **Harjinder Singh**

As a judge for the Malaysian Car of the Year competition, I approach every test drive with equal parts enthusiasm and scepticism. The MG Cyberster certainly made its intentions clear before I even turned a wheel. With its dramatic scissor-style gullwing doors and striking red paintwork, this car demands attention. Driving roof-down through Brickfields, I was met with admiring stares, raised phones, and more than a few thumbs up. In that sense, the Cyberster succeeds brilliantly: it delivers theatre in spades.

But is it a sports car? The answer, like the car itself, is nuanced.

On paper, the Cyberster ticks many modern performance boxes. It is low-slung, wide-shouldered, and electrically powered, promising strong acceleration and a low centre of gravity thanks to its battery placement. In real-world driving, it feels brisk and confident, especially in urban and flowing roads where instant torque works in its favour. Steering response is sharp enough, and the car Feels planted when pushed moderately.

However, the illusion starts to fray when the road surface deteriorates—something Malaysian roads are particularly adept at revealing. The ride quality is the Cyberster's weakest link. The suspension setup feels overly firm without sufficient sophistication, and the damper rating clearly needs reworking. Over uneven surfaces, the car struggles to settle, transmitting too much harshness into the cabin and breaking the sense of composure one expects from a true sports car. Instead of encouraging you to push harder, it asks you to back off.

The MG Cyberster is an exciting statement car and a bold reintroduction of MG's sporting aspirations in the electric age. It looks every bit the modern roadster and delivers undeniable presence. Yet, while it flirts convincingly with the idea of a sports car, refinement—particularly in ride and damping—will determine whether it truly earns that title, or remains a stylish grand tourer with sporting intentions.

BEST xEV OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Zeekr **009 Ultra Luxury**

Proton **e.Mas 5 Premium**

JAECOO **J7 phev**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

ZEEKR 009 ULTRA LUXURY

BEST xEV OF THE YEAR

ZEEKR 009 ULTRA LUXURY

By Chips Yap

Before 2022, only a few brands offered EVs but with the duty-exemption incentive provided, there was a sudden flood of brands, especially from China, introducing EVs in the Malaysian market. With the modern Chinese auto industry having only started in the 1980s, many of the car makers are relatively young, which has pros and cons.

The industry's youth has proven to be a strategic advantage. Unlike decades-old global giants, these companies are unburdened by the legacy costs of maintaining aging infrastructure. Instead, they can move ahead of the competition by building new state-of-the-art factories and integrating the latest digital and battery technologies from day one.

ZEEKR, part of the Geely Group, has been in existence only since 2021. Right from the start, it focussed on EVs for the premium segment, a highly competitive segment in China. However, with the resources of the Geely Group, it has been able to develop advanced vehicles that incorporate the latest technologies.

The 009 is a fine example of how it has utilised its advantage of being part of a larger group to develop a MPV which has greatly impressed all who travel in it, whether as a driver or a passenger. As one of the models which ZEEKR has chosen for its export offensive, the 009 has been designed to face market leaders like the Toyota Alphard head-on – and it has succeeded in winning over many MPV shoppers.

The advanced technology gives the 009 a 'wow' factor with strong acceleration and a surprisingly supple ride, thanks to the high-performance air suspension package. The claimed WLTP range of 604 kms is commendable, and recharging time from 10% to 80% with a 150kW DC charger is said to be within 30 minutes.

The 009 is a testament to what a modern automaker can achieve when it is free from the constraints of the past. By combining Geely's industrial scale with a digital-first mindset, ZEEKR is attracting premium EV shoppers who previously would never have looked past the established brands in the market.

BEST ICE OF THE YEAR

NOMINEES

Proton **Saga 1.5 Premium CVT**

Chery **Tiggo Cross 1.5 Hybrid CSH**

Chery **O5**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PROTON SAGA 1.5 PREMIUM CVT

BEST ICE OF THE YEAR

PROTON SAGA 1.5 PREMIUM

By **Lisa Kuok**

The Proton Saga 1.5 Premium has significant improvements that show that new technology with better fuel efficiency, safety and features don't have to be compromised for affordability. The introduction of the new 1.5-litre engine brings lower fuel consumption.

The upgrade in safety features to six airbags and the addition of Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) Level 1 features takes the Proton Saga 1.5 Premium to new levels of all-round safety.

Other improvements like better ride quality, handling and reduced Noise Vibration Harshness (NVH) as well as the updated exterior and interior styling, larger infotainment screen and the inclusion of Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity make the Proton Saga 1.5 Premium deserving of ICE Car of the Year award.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PROTON E.MAS 5 PREMIUM

BEST ENTRY LEVEL xEV OF THE YEAR

PROTON E.MAS 5 PREMIUM

By Adam Aubrey

The Proton e.MAS 5 Premium wins Best Entry-Level EV of the Year 2025 by redefining what "entry-level" means in the electric space.

Instead of feeling like a compromise-driven first step into EV ownership, it arrives as a well-rounded, thoughtfully executed package that makes electric mobility genuinely accessible to a wider audience.

As one of the first affordable EVs to be offered at this level in the Malaysian market, the e.MAS 5 Premium sets an important benchmark.

It delivers the essentials well, usable space, modern safety and connectivity, and a driving experience that feels smooth, predictable, and easy to live with.

There's no sense of novelty or experimentation here, it behaves like a car that has been engineered with everyday ownership firmly in mind.

Crucially, the e.MAS 5 Premium feels complete rather than basic. It doesn't ask buyers to overlook shortcomings in exchange for a lower price, and that is what sets it apart from other attempts at affordable electrification.

By making EV ownership feel approachable, and properly thought through, the Proton e.MAS 5 Premium earns its place as the Best Entry-Level EV of the Year.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

CHERY TIGGO 8 PHEV 1.5-FWD

MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT VEHICLE

CHERY TIGGO 8 PHEV 1.5-FWD

The Chery Tiggo 8 PHEV 1.5 FWD secured its title as the Most Energy Efficient Vehicle at the Malaysia Car of the Year 2025 by redefining the capabilities of the modern family SUV. At the core of its success is the innovative Chery Super Hybrid (CSH) platform, which utilizes a 5th-generation 1.5L TGDi dedicated hybrid engine. This powertrain achieved a remarkable 44.5% thermal efficiency, ensuring that energy loss is minimized while power delivery remains robust, effectively setting a new standard for sustainable industrial engineering in the SUV segment category.

The vehicle's victory was further solidified by its "dual-threat" approach to range and energy management. By pairing an 18.3kWh high-safety battery with a sophisticated Dedicated Hybrid Transmission (DHT), the Tiggo 8 PHEV offers a pure electric range of 90km for zero-emission urban commuting and a combined total range of up to 1,200km. This versatility allows Malaysian drivers to enjoy the silent, efficient benefits of an electric vehicle for daily use while maintaining the long-distance reliability required for interstate travel, all within a spacious 7-seater configuration.

This accolade is backed by rigorous technical validation and national compliance standards. The fuel consumption figures and energy performance metrics that led to this award were obtained through Chery's submission of an official emission test report as per the requirement of the Malaysia Standard MS 2722:2022 for an Energy Efficient Vehicle (EEV) Certification by MARii. By meeting these stringent requirements, the Tiggo 8 PHEV has proven that high-performance automotive design can align perfectly with Malaysia's National Automotive Policy and the broader goals of environmental stewardship.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

NISSAN KICKS E-POWER VLT

INNOVATIVE TRANSITION TOWARDS ZERO EMISSION MOBILITY

NISSAN KICKS E-POWER VLT

By **Zachary Ho**

Policy Alignment: A Pragmatic Path to Net-Zero

Nissan's e-POWER technology represents a pragmatic solution for Malaysia's transition to a net-zero nation. This technology offers a synergistic alignment with the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) and the Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint, providing a readily scalable bridge of electric mobility that supports the nation's 2050 objective to become carbon-neutral.

The Technology: 100% Electric Drive, 0% Range Anxiety

Unlike traditional hybrids where the engine and motor take turns driving the wheels, e-POWER vehicles are 100% electric motor driven. The petrol engine acts solely as an on-board generator to charge the battery; it is mechanically decoupled from the wheels.

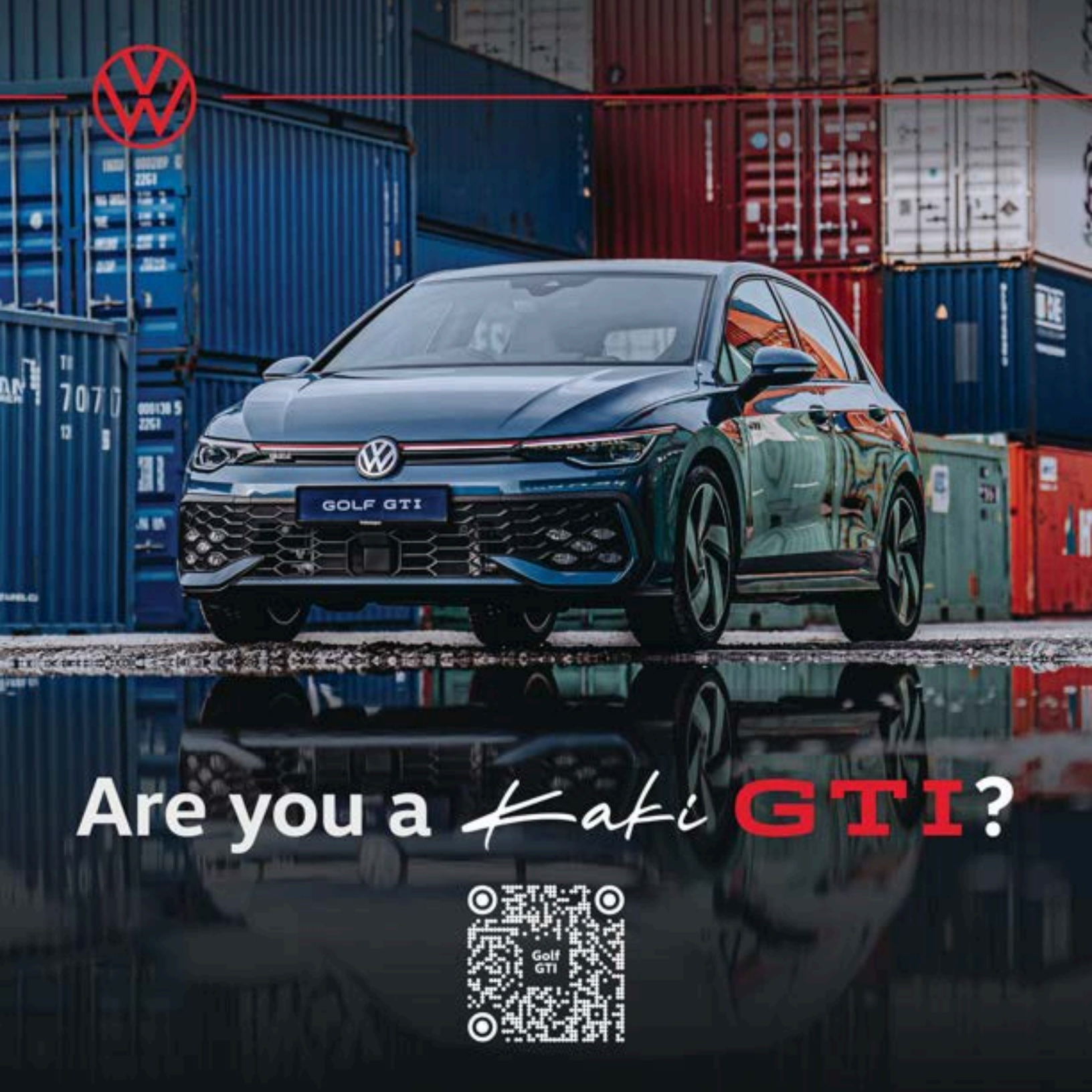
This architecture delivers the instant torque and silent smoothness of a Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV), but without the need for external charging. As such, it functions as a "self-charging electric drive" that provides an EV experience but requires no change in consumer refueling habits nor reliance on a charging grid.

Strategic Impact: Inclusive Decarbonization

Thus the e-POWER concept strategically addresses the "infrastructure gap" by delivering immediate carbon reduction benefits without waiting for a matured public charging network. This makes it a critical "stepping stone" technology for:

- **Urban Accessibility:** Allowing residents of condominiums or apartments to enjoy electric mobility without needing home charging
- **Rural Connectivity:** Ensuring that population in areas far from the charging grid can still participate in the green transition
- **Emission Efficiency:** Because the engine operates only as a generator, it runs at its most fuel-efficient RPM, significantly reducing tailpipe emissions and noise pollution in densely populated areas

By lowering adoption barriers while delivering measurable environmental gains, Nissan e-POWER serves as a vital, inclusive catalyst for Malaysia's journey toward a net-zero future.


GOLF GTI
Are you a Kaki GTI?
Golf GTI

OVERALL MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

NOMINEES

JAECOO J7 PHEV

Proton e.Mas 5 Premium

Zeekr 009 Ultra Luxury

To win the award for being the Overall Malaysia Car of the Year, the car must first win in its category.

The overall winner is then picked from the category winner with the highest score. Nominated cars are evaluated on 8 criterias and judges award scores.

ZEEKR 009

OVERALL MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

“This year’s Overall Car of the Year, an electric MPV, the Zeekr 009 Ultra Luxury, reflects the significance of electrification in the MPV category.

The silence, zero vibration and coolness of the electric motor versus the heat bubble that builds up around a stationary ICE MPV, is the final factor in the equation to the perfect MPV as a mobile office, a mobile conference room and finally, with enough range for festive seasons’ back-to-the-hometown migration.”

Yamin Yong

Chairman
Malaysia Car of the Year
Panel of Judges

ZEEKR 009

By Chips Yap

ZEEKR was among the new wave of Chinese brands that arrived in Malaysia 3 years ago, and though unknown, its first products – the 009 MPV and X SUV – impressed right away. Part of the Geely Group, ZEEKR focussed on EVs and with the 009, it has also targeted the premium MPV segment long (and still) dominated by the Toyota Alphard/Vellfire.

First impressions count and ZEEKR has made the 009 impressive enough that even though many had never heard of the brand before 2024, one look inside made them set aside the usual concerns about unknown brands. The price – under RM350,000 (with duty-exemption) for the flagship Ultra Luxury version – also changed the price-value proposition.

With its 'business class' cabin and high quality materials throughout, the premium nature is very evident. Spacious enough to serve as a mobile office, it is

Business Class cabin, spacious.
Photo credit: ©**ZEEKR**

Family room on wheels, 7.4 sq.metres
Photo credit: ©**ZEEKR**

also an ideal family room on wheels with up to 7.4 square metres of space. An extensive list of standard equipment has convenience features to make every journey a joy, coupled with high safety standards and advanced active safety systems.

Technically, the 009 benefits from the combined resources of the Geely Group, including the group's Sustainable Experience Architecture (SEA) developed for EVs. Being a relatively young company, ZEEKR is also able to draw on the latest advancements in EV technologies to make the 009 one of the most advanced EVs in the market.

Though there were other worthy contenders for Overall Malaysia Car of the Year, the 009 best demonstrates what can be achieved in terms of technical advancement, opulence and at an attractive price point.

Experience Malaysia's 1st
in-city offroad & camping event
in collaboration with The Rainforest Challenge

@MAEPS | 30th May - 1st June 2026

Visit **www.oric.my**

or

Scan the QR code above for more info

Proprietary UX vs Apple CarPlay & Android Auto: Who Really Owns the Dashboard?

By **Zachary Ho**

Photo credit: ©**Zachary Ho**

Infotainment systems have come a long way—from basic MP3-playing head units to today's tablet-sized touchscreens that dominate dashboards.

In urban Malaysia, where Waze is less a convenience and more a daily survival too for navigating through Kuala Lumpur, George Town or Kota Kinabalu, smartphone mirroring has become a non-negotiable expectation rather than a luxury feature.

Yet behind this familiarity, a global battle is unfolding for control of the in-car digital experience. As vehicles become increasingly dependent on software to shape user experience, the role of Apple CarPlay and Android Auto is being questioned by automakers themselves. The issue is not whether proprietary systems can replace smartphone mirroring—but whether drivers actually want them to two years ago.

Reclaiming the Operating System

For over a decade, carmakers effectively outsourced infotainment to Apple and Google. The logic was straightforward: familiar interfaces, rapid development cycles, and frequent updates. Google's

voice recognition, for instance, evolved quickly enough to recognise local street names, making voice-guided navigation genuinely usable in markets like Malaysia.

Software-defined vehicles are now changing that equation. Modern cars generate vast volumes of data—driving behaviour, location, energy usage, media consumption—and control of the operating system determines who owns that data, the user interface, and the commercial opportunities tied to it.

This shift also aligns with the industry's growing interest on subscription-based revenue. Features once sold as lifetime add-ons are being repackaged as monthly services. Tesla's move to offer Full Self-Driving exclusively via subscription from February 2026 is a clear example. In this context, the dashboard is no longer just an interface—it becomes a monetisation platform, one OEMs are increasingly reluctant to hand over to outside parties.

Against Smartphone Mirroring

Tesla remains the most prominent example of this philosophy in practice. From early on, the brand rejected CarPlay and Android Auto, positioning its proprietary Linux-based operating system as a core part of the vehicle's identity. The result is a tightly integrated ecosystem: Tesla Maps with Supercharger-aware routing, native media apps such as Spotify and Tidal, and the introduction of Grok in 2025—an AI assistant capable of handling layered, conversational voice commands that many legacy systems still struggle to execute smoothly.

Even established manufacturers have begun testing similar waters. General Motors' 2023 decision to phase out Apple CarPlay and Android Auto in new electric vehicles sparked significant backlash. GM's defence centres on its Ultifi platform with "Google Built-in," arguing that a fully native system offers a safer, more consistent experience than what it describes as a fragmented phone-projection layer.

Taking the Hybrid Path

Premium European brands have adopted a more pragmatic strategy.

Mercedes-Benz's MB.OS repositions infotainment as a full digital "agentic copilot." Powered by Google Gemini and ChatGPT-4.0, the system maintains conversational context, understands natural language intent, and uses the Unity game engine to render high-fidelity 3D Surround Navigation in real time.

BMW's Operating System X follows a similar philosophy, introducing Panoramic Vision with windscreen-level projection and a QuickSelect widget-based interface designed to reduce menu depth and driver distraction.

Crucially, both brands continue to support Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The strategy is clear: retain smartphone mirroring as a safety net, while making the native system compelling enough that drivers gradually stop reaching for their phones.

China's Ecosystem-First Strategy

Nowhere is this convergence more advanced than in China. There, the car is treated as an extension of the personal digital ecosystem.

Homegrown platforms such as Huawei's HIMA and Xiaomi's HyperOS exemplify this approach. Xiaomi's SU7 integrates HyperIsland notifications, "Circle to Search," and XiaoAI voice intelligence, allowing seamless continuity between phone, home, and vehicle. In these ecosystems, the distinction between native UI and phone projection is largely irrelevant—the experience is unified across devices.

A Google map that popped up on an Android OS in a Chinese EV in response to a voice command: "I need to charge my car."
Photo credit: ©**Zachary Ho**

Reality Check

Despite manufacturer claims that native systems are inherently safer, independent research paints a more nuanced picture. A landmark AAA Foundation study found that Apple CarPlay and Android Auto enabled drivers to complete common tasks—such as setting navigation or making calls—24% to 31% faster than most built-in systems.

The advantage lies in familiarity and iteration speed. Smartphone interfaces improve continuously, and users encounter the same layouts and logic across vehicles. That consistency reduces learning curves and interaction time.

Customer sentiment reflects this reality. J.D. Power surveys consistently rank infotainment as the lowest-rated aspect of new vehicles, yet satisfaction scores are up to 35 points higher among owners who regularly use smartphone mirroring.

What About Malaysia?

Where native systems excel: Proprietary platforms allow deeper vehicle integration—battery pre-conditioning for fast charging, intelligent HVAC adjustments based on real-time range data, and advanced driver assistance visualisation. These are areas where phone-based systems cannot fully compete.

Where they fall short: Subscription fatigue is a real concern when features such as premium navigation, connected services, or remote functions are tied to monthly fees. There is also the obsolescence gap: vehicle hardware must last a decade, yet infotainment systems often feel outdated and sluggish within a few years—especially when compared to rapidly evolving smartphones.

Even Ferrari has publicly acknowledged that smartphones remain superior for navigation, prompting a renewed embrace of phone projection. That admission carries weight.

For Malaysian drivers, the bar is simple and unforgiving. If manufacturers want to remove Waze, Spotify, or WhatsApp integration, their proprietary systems must be faster, smarter, and genuinely better—without hidden costs. **Until then, the ultimate judge of a new vehicle is simply the presence of Android Auto and Apple CarPlay icons on the screen.**

Automotive Person of the Year
ROLL OF HONOUR

This is the highest individual honor of the year, awarded to a visionary leader who has demonstrated extraordinary influence and dedication to the Malaysian automotive industry. The recipient is recognized for their exemplary leadership, strategic foresight, and pivotal role in driving sectoral growth.

Whether through pioneering new technologies, fostering industry-wide collaboration, or steering their organization to unprecedented heights, the Automotive Person of the Year embodies the spirit of innovation and excellence that propels the nation's mobility landscape forward.

2024
Mohamad Reza Bin Abdul Mutalib, Karrus Automotive Group

2023
Ir. Ahmad Hadri Haris, Tesla Sdn Bhd

2019
Dr. Li Chunrong, Proton

2018
Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, *Automotive Lifetime Achievement Award*

2017
Datuk Dr.Zahari Husin, Perodua Sales Sdn Bhd

2016
Yoichiro Ueno, Honda Malaysia

2015
Roland Folger, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

2014
Datuk Aminar Rashid, Perodua

2013
Datuk Ben Yeoh, Bermaz Motor

2012
Datuk Samson Anand George, Nasim Sdn Bhd

2011
Mr. JP Chin, JPM Motorsports

2010
SM Nasarudin SM Nasimuddin, NAZA

2009
Datuk Syed Abdull Hafiz Syed Abu Bakar, Perodua
Datuk Dr Ang Bon Beng, Edaran Tan Chong

2008
Datuk Syed Zainal Abidin Tahir, Proton

2007
Datuk Saw Choo Boon, Shell Malaysia

2006
Tan Sri Nasimuddin SM Amin, NAZA

2005
Datuk Frank Steinleitner, Daimler Chrysler Malaysia

2004
Tan Sri Tengku Mahaleel Ariff, Proton

2003
Tan Sri Ab. Rahman Omar, Perodua

2002
Tan Sri SM Nasimuddin SM Amin, NAZA

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

DATO' SRI ZAINAL ABIDIN AHMAD

AUTOMOTIVE PERSON OF THE YEAR 2025

Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Ahmad, President and CEO of Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua), was conferred the Automotive Person of the Year (APOY) 2025 award at the Malaysia Car of the Year (MCOTY) Gala Awards Dinner in Kuala Lumpur, 22 January 2026.

Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation, Yang Amat Berhormat Datuk Amar Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof, presented the award in recognition of Datuk Seri Zainal's outstanding leadership and vital contributions to the development of Malaysia's automotive industry.

YB Sim Tze Tzin, Deputy Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, presented the Malaysia Car of the Year and category awards, to the respective winners at the gala dinner.

Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin is the 21st recipient of the APOY. Nominees are submitted to the Malaysia Automotive, Robotics and Internet of Things Institute (MARii), an agency under the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI). MARii evaluates and selects, based on established criteria.

The APOY award recognises industry leaders of exemplary organisational stewardship, who contributed to advancement of the automotive sector. Datuk Seri Zainal played a pivotal role with MITI and other government bodies, in formulating the National Automotive Policy.

Perodua achieved sustained growth under Datuk Seri Zainal, staking its position as Malaysia's leading automotive brand. He served Perodua for three decades from 1995.

Perodua has consistently prioritised vendor development, guiding its local vendors to become international exporters of automotive components, contributing to Malaysia's manufacturing dynamism and export competitiveness.

In 2025, Perodua recorded sales of approximately 360,000 vehicles, accounting for 43.9 per cent of Malaysia's total industry volume of about 800,000 vehicles.

The company's performance reflects consumer confidence, achieved by its product quality, affordability, and strong resale value in the secondary market. It stays abreast of technology trends, including EV.

Datuk Seri Zainal's leadership style emphasises teamwork, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term capacity building.

Through enduring partnerships with Daihatsu Motor Co. of Japan, Perodua's workforce, its vendor network, and Malaysian consumers, the company stands as a key pillar of the automotive industry, to meet national development objectives.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

ELECTRON

EXCELLENCE IN EV INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

TNB Electron is Tenaga Nasional Berhad's public EV charging network, built to make electric mobility practical across Malaysia. TNB Electron deploys a mix of AC and DC fast chargers in strategic, everyday locations so drivers can top up with confidence.

Beyond hardware, TNB Electron focuses on reliable uptime, responsive support, and simple payment flows that remove friction from every charge. The result is a stronger EV ecosystem that helps households and businesses make the switch to greener transport.

Excellence in EV Infrastructure & Connectivity: TNB Electron

By Shamsul Yunos

Photo credit: ©TNB Electron

Bridging the Gap and Powering the Path to a Greener Malaysia

In the history of the Malaysian Car of the Year (COTY) Awards, we have celebrated not only the engineering excellence of the vehicles themselves but also the achievements of those who have excelled in supporting transformation because a car is only as good as the journey it can complete.

This year, we honor TNB Electron for its transformative role in reducing range anxiety and building an EV ecosystem that has eliminated many of the charging deserts across the peninsula.

From Highways to Everyway

While the early days of EV charging were focused almost exclusively on the North-South Expressway (PLUS), East Coast Expressway (LPT1 & LPT2) and to some extent the West Coast Expressway corridors, the second half of 2025 saw TNB Electron execute a surprising pivot in their strategic expansion.

By identifying and aggressively targeting "charging deserts"—regions previously bypassed by commercial operators—TNB has ensured that EV ownership is no longer a luxury reserved for urban dwellers.

The inclusion of high-speed hubs in locations such as Jeli (Kelantan), Muadzam Shah (Pahang), and Kuala Selangor (Selangor) has effectively "unlocked" the East-West links and coastal routes. For the first time, an EV driver can traverse the Titiwangsa Range or navigate the rural heartlands with more confidence.
While the Electron charger at Paka East Bound Rest Area was crucial for East Coast trips, the gap to Kota Bharu meant a BEV with less than 400km in range would take on the challenge with pounding anxiety.

Electron gave us hints of their broader strategy to eliminate charging deserts early last year when they opened chargers at Kampung Gemuroh that sits at the end of LPT2 and Selising, which is about 40 minutes before Kota Bharu.

Gemuroh is a medium low powered 60kW charger with two guns, not the fastest but it certainly made trips to Kota Bharu a lot less worrying.

The "Asset-First" Strategy: Speed to Market

Innovation isn't always about new technology; sometimes, it’s about smarter implementation. TNB Electron’s decision to convert their own maintenance yards, service offices, and administrative hubs into public-facing charging stations has set a new benchmark for infrastructure rollout.

By utilizing their own land and existing grid proximity, Electron achieved record-breaking installation rate in late 2025.

These "TNB Yards" are much welcomed by the EV community as beacons for travelers, offering high-capacity charging in areas where commercial malls or fuel stations were yet to reach.

High-Speed Dominance: The 100kW+ Standard

TNB Electron didn't just aim for quantity; they prioritized quality of time. Recognizing that mass EV adoption requires fast turnaround times, they focused on high-powered DC chargers.

- Leader in Ultra-Fast Charging: As of early 2026, TNB Electron has become the largest operator of chargers exceeding 100kW.

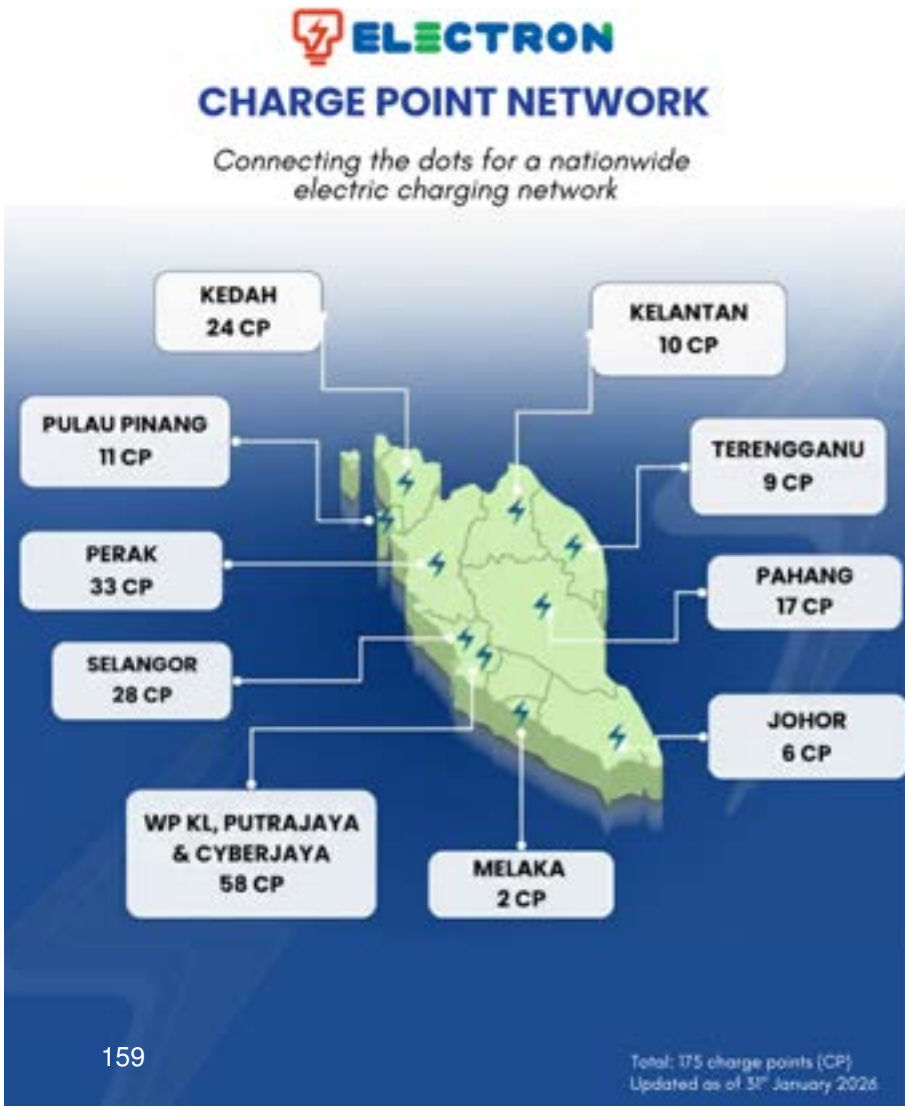
- Dynamic Power: Their deployment of 240kW and 400kW dynamic hubs (such as the flagship PRCC Bayan Lepas hub) allows multiple vehicles to charge simultaneously without the "power-split" frustration common in older stations.

- Frictionless Experience: The introduction of universal card payment terminals (JuiceUP) across their network has removed the "app fatigue" for users, making charging as simple as tapping a credit card.

A Worthy Recipient

The opening of the Bayan Lepas Hub is proof of TNB's commitment to the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) is unwavering.

For their vision in turning every corner of Malaysia into an EV-friendly destination, and for their strategic use of national assets to benefit the public, the Malaysian Car of the Year panel is proud to award TNB Electron for Excellence in EV Infrastructure and Connectivity.



CONGRATULATIONS MALAYSIA

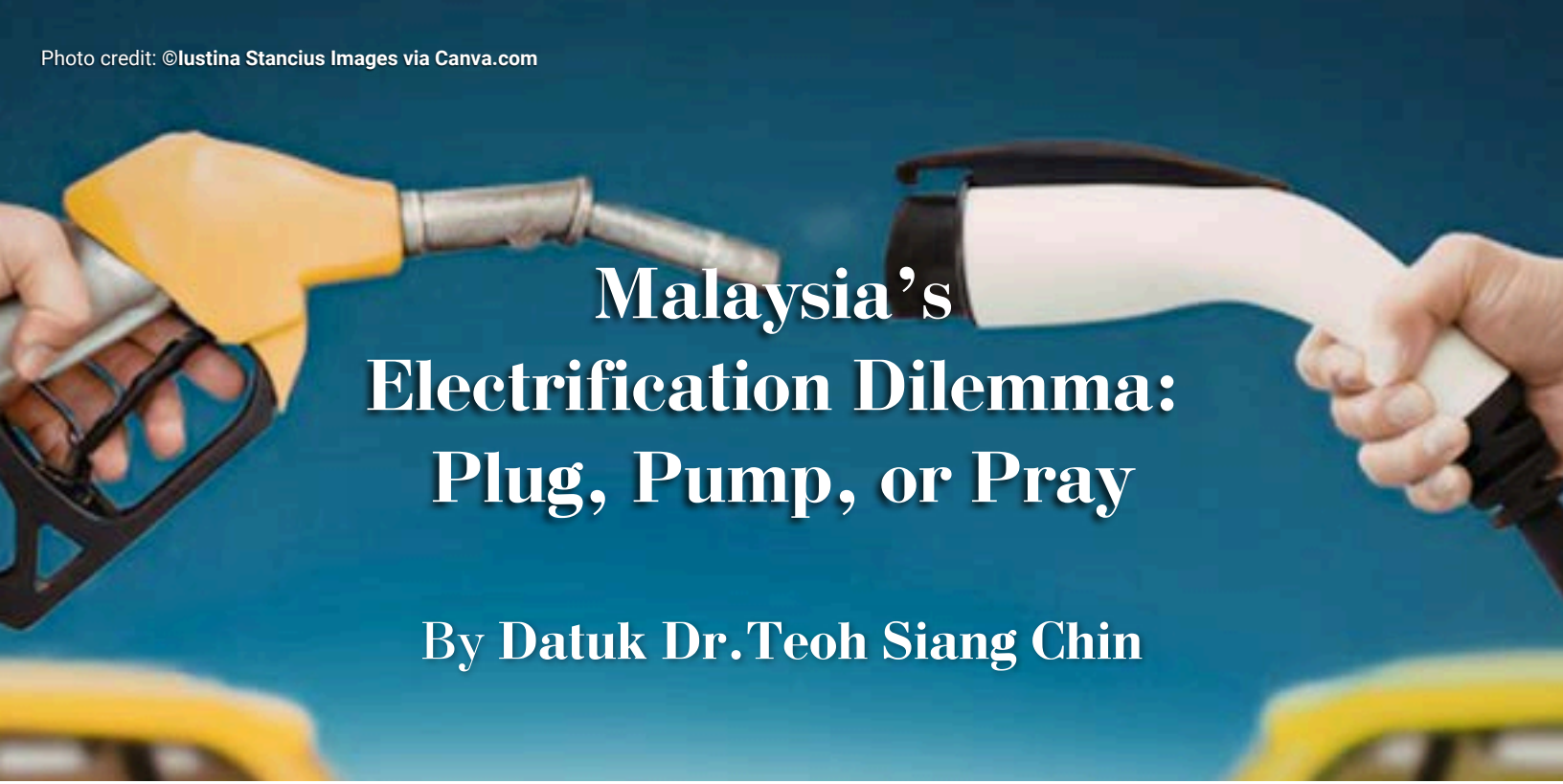
Driving Our Nation Towards Zero-Emission Future
(2020 - 2025)

ZEVA
Zero Emission Vehicle Association

SILENT ROADS, STRONGER PLANET

Data source: www.data.gov.my, www.st.gov.my, www.planmalaysia.gov.my and MyZEVA internal analysis

Scan here to visit our website



Malaysia's Electrification Dilemma: Plug, Pump, or Pray

By Datuk Dr.Teoh Siang Chin

Vehicular electrification in Malaysia is a bit like ordering kopi at a mamak. You know there are many options, yet somehow even kurang kurang manis still comes with sugar.

Malaysia's subsidised fuel means the financial argument for electrification is, at best, polite rather than persuasive. When RON95 costs less than bottled water, the urgency to plug in diminishes. Yes, the Gajah in the boot – cheap petrol.

In theory, the PHEV is perfect for Malaysia. Urban driving? Electric mode. Rural roads? Petrol backup. Cheap petrol? Well... we'll come back to that. On paper, it sounds like the national car of compromise—very on brand.

However many PHEVs, tragically, live their lives as very heavy petrol cars, hauling batteries around like unused gym memberships.

This leads us to the great irony of the PHEV: complexity. You get the engine, the motor, the battery, the inverter, the cooling systems for each, and enough software to qualify as a minor IT project. It's a technological tour de force — ingenious, impressive, and slightly alarming when something goes wrong. Weight increases, servicing becomes

more "specialised," and long-term ownership involves a quiet hope that nothing expensive decides to fail out of warranty.

Pure ICE cars, by contrast, look almost charmingly simple now. One engine. One fuel. Refuel anywhere in five minutes. Mechanics in every town who can diagnose problems by ear. There's a reason old Hiluxes refuse to die—they operate on diesel, stubbornness, and sheer mechanical honesty.

EVs, meanwhile, promise the opposite extreme: fewer moving parts, instant torque, and a future free of oil changes. In urban Malaysia, they make enormous sense—if you have home charging, predictable routines, and the patience to explain charging etiquette to curious relatives. Venture too far off the grid, however, and the EV experience becomes a masterclass in planning, apps, backup plans, and optimism.

Enter the Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV), confidently straddling the worlds of Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) and Electric Vehicle (EV), waving cheerfully at both camps while quietly adding 300 kg to the kerb weight. That's about a fully packed 5 passengers – All the time, parked sitting on the suspension, around corners moving the moment of inertia and each acceleration and braking – unseen perhaps yet a dead weight that adversely impacts performance.

Urban Malaysia is where BEV shine brightest, at least in marketing brochures. Short daily commutes, traffic jams measured in podcasts rather than kilometres, and the satisfaction of gliding

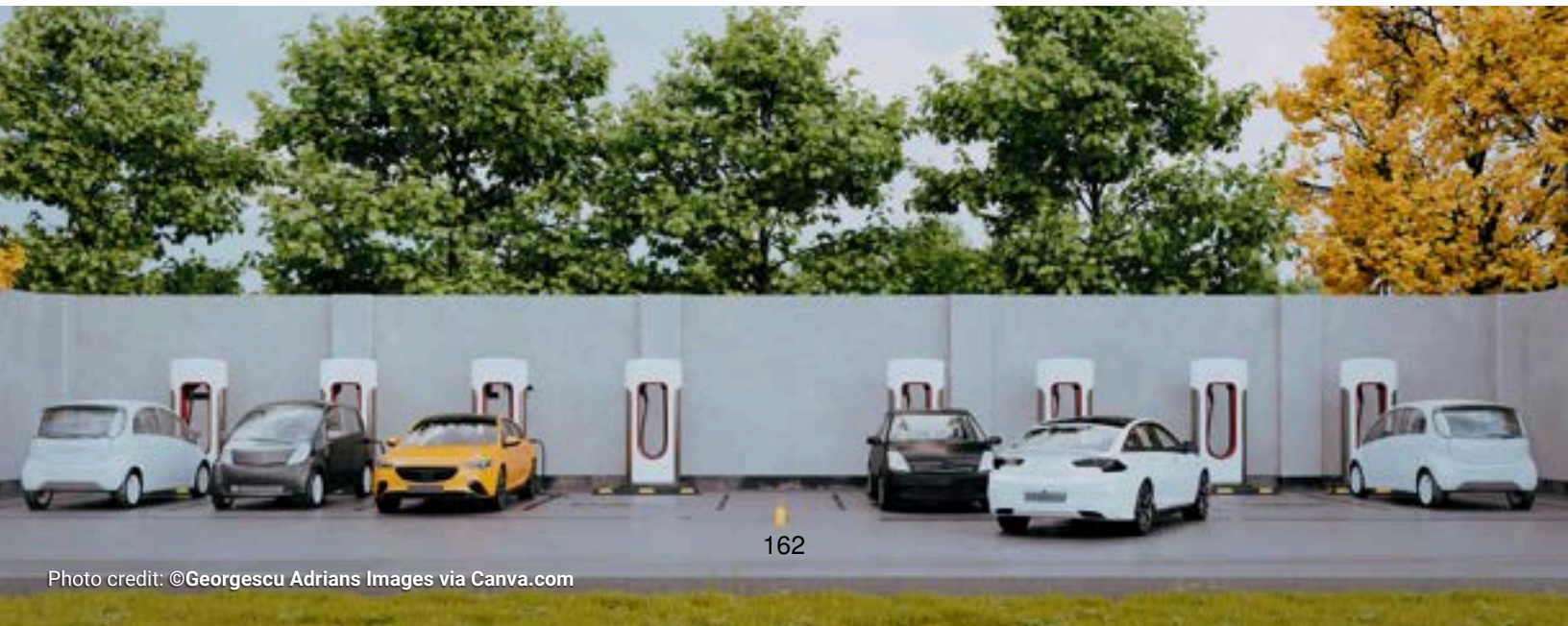


Photo credit: ©**Georgescu Adrians Images via Canva.com**

silently past petrol stations while feeling mildly superior. You plug in at home, top up overnight, and commute all week without burning a drop of fuel—assuming, of course, that you remembered to plug in, your charger works, and your extension cable hasn't mysteriously migrated to the neighbour's house.

Then there's rural Malaysia, where electrification becomes more...aspirational. Chargers are rarer, distances are longer, and the idea of planning a journey around kilowatt-hours feels faintly urban and suspicious. This is where the petrol engine in a PHEV earns its keep, stepping in heroically like an understudy who knows all the lines. Range anxiety disappears, replaced by the comforting glow of a fuel gauge and the knowledge that even the smallest pekan has a petrol station, a tyre shop, and unsolicited advice.

So where does that leave the PHEV? Squarely in the middle, sipping electrons in the city, burning petrol in the kampung, and quietly wondering why it's carrying so much weight all the time. It is not the most elegant solution, nor the cheapest, nor the simplest. But it is very Malaysian: flexible, pragmatic, and designed to offend as few people as possible.

Electrification here will not be a revolution. It will be a negotiation. And the PHEV, bless its complicated heart, is our current compromise—plug when convenient, pump when necessary, and yet the majority of Malaysians will pray that cheap petrol lasts. The march towards carbon zero is dependent on economics and politics catering for the popular vote.

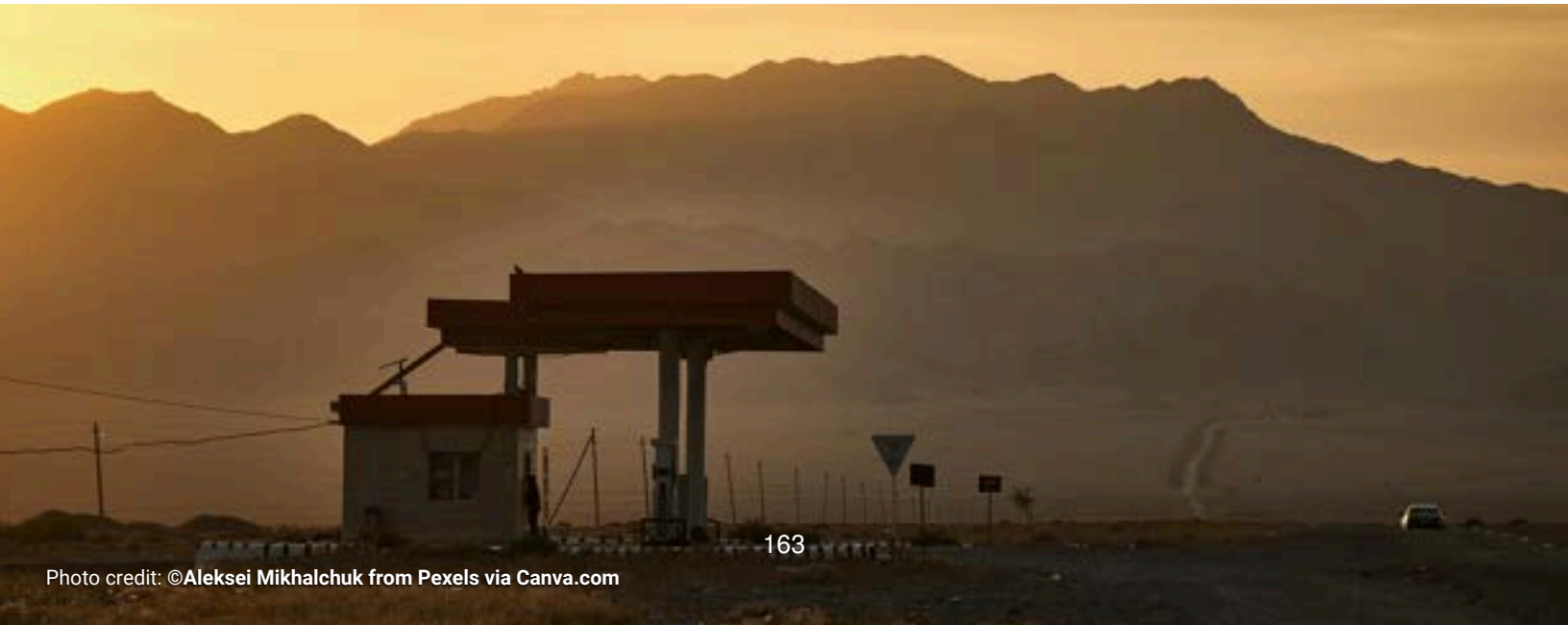


Photo credit: ©**Aleksei Mikhalchuk from Pexels via Canva.com**

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

SPECIAL MENTION

PERODUA

CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT EV EFFORT

Recognizing a profound impact on Malaysia's National Energy Transition, this special mention is awarded to the vehicle brand that has significantly invested in EV assembly and achieved the historic milestone of producing the first Malaysia-made EV, driving the nation toward a greener, carbon-neutral future.

Perodua's 'Space Program': How Malaysia's Market Leader Built an EV in 28 Months

By Chips Yap

Photo credit: ©Chips Yap

The auto industry typically operates on a 4 to 5-year cycle for new model development. Yet, Perodua went from a blank sheet to a fully engineered electric vehicle (EV) in just 28 months – just slightly more than the 2-year time-frame set by the Prime Minister. While it may not be apparent to most Malaysians, this project represents a significant leap comparable to the inception of the Malaysian National Car project in 1984.

Over 33 years, Perodua had learnt how to develop and build cars, a diligent student that paid attention to all it was taught by its technical partner, Daihatsu Motor.

From the Kancil in 1993, the expertise grew and Malaysians gained increasing capabilities which were shown in the Axia, Bezza and later generations of the Myvi.

But the project that Perodua had been assigned by the PM was for a new type of motor vehicle without the internal combustion engine – a fully electric vehicle. It was something which they had little experience with. Daihatsu was not involved (and not interested) which meant the project was to be entirely Perodua's own effort and with its own resources.

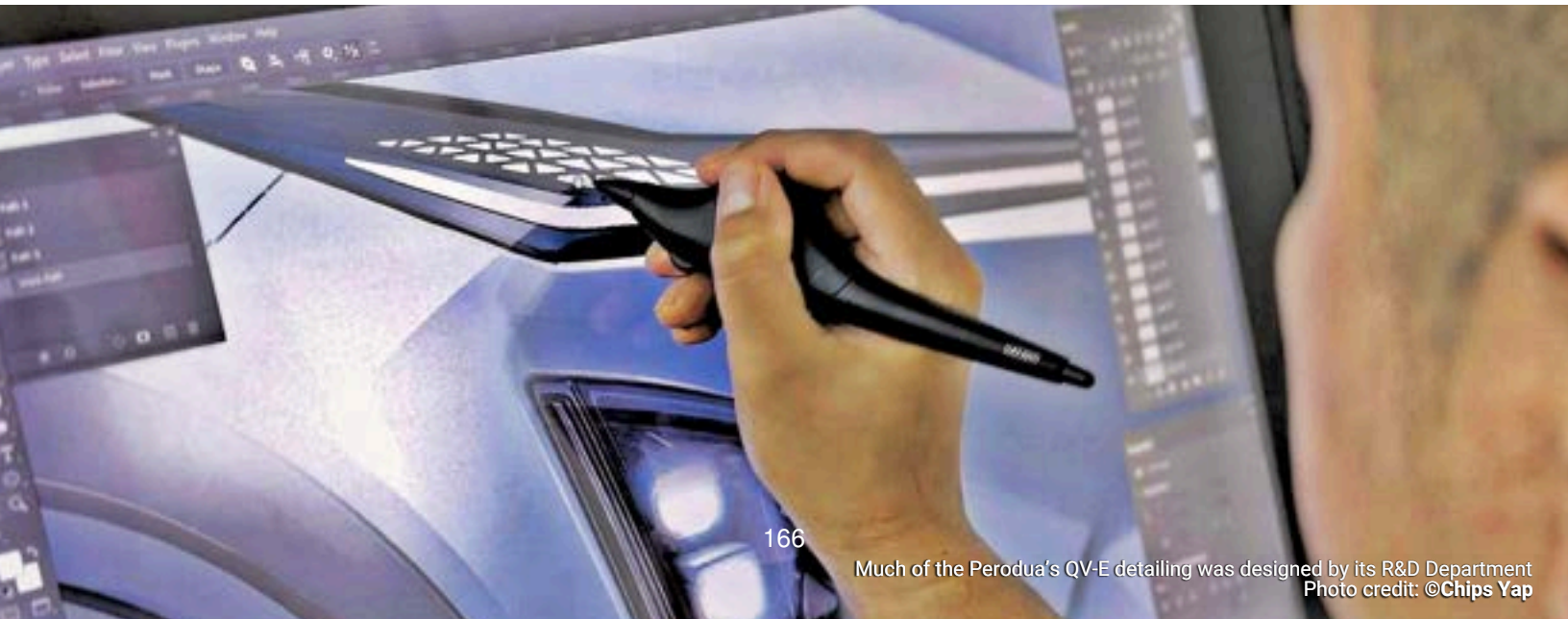
So the EV project that produced the QV-E was something like the American space program which President John F. Kennedy initiated 'to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade' [of the 1960s]. Almost everything was new to the engineers, even to design a powerful rocket to send the spacecraft up and another one to land on the moon. Basic aerospace engineering aside, there were many unknowns because it just had not been done before.

That's the same challenge that faced Perodua's engineers and understanding that they didn't have all the expertise in EVs, they turned to specialists for assistance.

One of them was Magna-Steyr, an engineering and manufacturing company in Austria which provides consultancy services to various automakers and also builds some models for them.

For example, the BMW Z4 and Toyota GR Supra are built at the Magna Steyr factory, along with the Mercedes-Benz G-Class. Magna Steyr provided Perodua with important insights into EV development and helped in engineering development of the architecture and platform, as well as systems integration.

Developing a brand new EV was only half the challenge; Perodua had also to plan and develop the ecosystem for making and supporting it. Although it has always been Perodua's aim to have Malaysian companies as suppliers, the nature of this project made it challenging to uphold that objective.



Much of the Perodua's QV-E detailing was designed by its R&D Department
Photo credit: ©**Chips Yap**

Perodua QV-E was introduced in December 2025 with a base price of RM80,000
Photo credit: ©**Chips Yap**

Many suppliers had no experience in EV parts and systems, so it was also entirely new to them. In the past, a longer development time allowed for suppliers to prepare but with such a short time-frame for the EV project, it was difficult to involve many local suppliers. Anyway, by the time of launch, there were around 50 Malaysian suppliers and as localisation grows, the number is expected to reach 70 by 2030.

Even the manufacturing of the EV required building a new facility that would be dedicated to EVs, part of the project's RM800 million cost. As the initial volumes are low, some processes have still to be outsourced and one of them is painting.

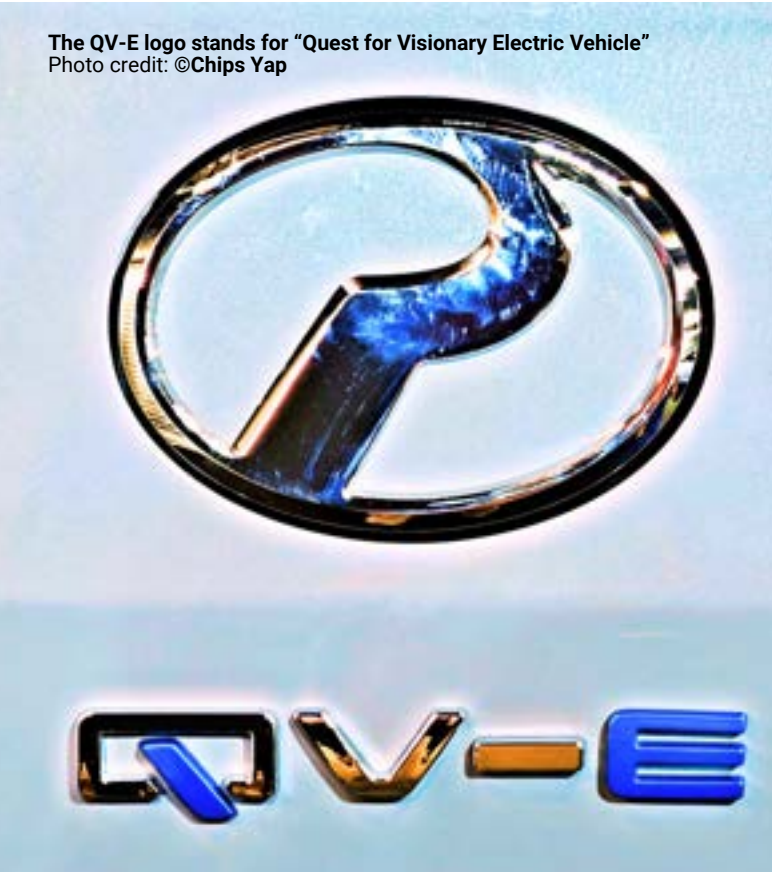
For this, Perodua will use the painting facilities at the nearby factory of Tan Chong Motors, one of the oldest car companies in Malaysia.

Perodua's approach to developing its own EV is, in some ways, like how Toyota started. Its founder, Kiichiro Toyoda, insisted on creating a company that could be self-sufficient. It was a slower process as much had to be learnt but this approach allowed his engineers to understand and intimately know what they were making. Thus when technical issues arise in Perodua's EVs, the expertise to fix them resides entirely in Sg. Choh, Selangor (where Perodua is based).

For Perodua, having total ownership of its EV and all its intellectual property means it can chart its own destiny forward. It can make changes to the product to suit the market and more importantly, it can export anywhere it wants without someone else having a say. Furthermore, having developed the product itself, it also does not have the extra burden of royalties to pay to another company for sharing a product.

Perodua's QV-E electric motor and battery controls
Photo credit: ©**Chips Yap**

The QV-E logo stands for "Quest for Visionary Electric Vehicle"
Photo credit: ©**Chips Yap**



The Perodua EV project supports the government's National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) which sets a target of 20% of new vehicle sales to be electrified vehicles by 2030, rising to 50% by 2040. As the market leader, Perodua can play an important role in this transition by doing what it has done best – providing cars for the masses. Of course, this is just the start so costs remain high and an EV that is priced for the lowest end of the market is still a work in progress. But Perodua has shown that, over time and with bigger volumes, it can bring prices down with economies of scale.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR AWARDS

GALA DINNER 2025

HIGHLIGHTS AND SPECIAL AWARDS

22 JANUARY 2026


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


YAB Datuk
Prime Minister of


A CAR OF THE YEAR


GALA DINNER 2025


Automotive Person of the Year
DATO' SRI ZAINAL ABIDIN
BIN AHMAD
President and Chief Executive Officer


Overall MCOTY 2025
Zeekr 009
Ultra Luxury


People's Choice Award
Proton X50 1.5TD
Flagship


Best Selling Car Brand of the Year
Perodua

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PERODUA

BEST SELLING CAR BRAND OF THE YEAR

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PROTON X50 1.5TD FLAGSHIP

PEOPLES' CHOICE AWARD

This Award is voted by social media readers, from a list of top selling cars for the year.


Excellence in EV Infrastructure
& Connectivity
TNB Electron


Best Resale Car Brand by CARSOME
Perodua


Special Mention-Contribution
to Government Effort in EV
Perodua


Rakyat's Choice : MPV Awards
XPENG


Automotive Suppiler of the Year
WINNER
Delloyd Electronics (M)
Sdn Bhd


MPV xEV of the Year
Zeekr 009
Ultra Luxury

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PERODUA

CARSOME
BEST RESALE VALUE BRAND 2025

CARSOME's marketplace data and pricing insights recognise Perodua as the Best Second Hand Value Car Brand in Malaysia. Transaction trends across CARSOME's platform show strong demand and stable resale value, giving us the confidence to continue offering Perodua vehicles as dependable choices for Malaysian drivers seeking practical and reliable everyday mobility.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

PERODUA

EXCELLENCE IN AUTOMOTIVE SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Perodua has successfully integrated environmental stewardship into its operational DNA. It is awarded for high-performance ecosystem strategic optimisation and energy efficiency, supported by energy management and renewable energy. By maintaining rigorous standards in waste and water management, the winner demonstrates that industrial excellence and ecological responsibility are the twin pillars of a sustainable automotive future.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

DELLOYD

DELLOYD ELECTRONICS SDN BHD

AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes the most distinguished automotive supplier among all local and multi-national (MNC) suppliers in Malaysia. It honors the company that sets the absolute benchmark for innovation and leadership, having attained the highest distinction in the MARii Year 2025 Supplier Competitiveness Level (SCL) Assessment.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

XPENG

RAKYAT CHOICE ROADSHOW MPV CATEGORY WINNER


Best Local Automotive
Supplier of the Year
WINNER
Asian Automotive Steels
Sdn Bhd


Best EV Friendly Property
Development Company
Sime Darby
Property


Innovative Transition towards
Zero Emission Mobility
Nissan KICKS e-POWER


Strategic Partners
MotorTakaful
.com


Strategic Partners
BANKRAKYAT
Your Bank of Choice


Strategic Partners
CARSOME

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

Sime Darby Property

BEST EV FRIENDLY PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

This award recognizes a premier property developer in Malaysia that has set the benchmark for EV-integrated living. It honors an organization that seamlessly blends world-class infrastructure and innovation with a core commitment to Sustainability. The recipient is distinguished by their significant Industry Standing and their visionary role in future-proofing Malaysia's urban landscape.

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR 2025

WINNER

ASIAN AUTOMOTIVE STEELS SDN BHD

BEST LOCAL AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

This award honors the local automotive supplier that defines the pinnacle of manufacturing excellence. It recognizes a local automotive supplier that has achieved transformative results in Quality (minimized defects), Cost (strategic cost-down initiatives), and Delivery (zero line stops).

By attaining exemplary result in the MARii Year 2025 Supplier Competitiveness Level (SCL) Assessment, the recipient exemplifies the highest standards of innovation, leadership, and operational efficiency, setting the benchmark for the domestic industry.


SUV of the Year : Price Below RM 200K
JAECOO J8 AWD


SUV of the Year : Price RM 200K - RM 500K
Zeekr 7X AWD
Performance


SUV of the Year : Price Above RM 500K
Porsche Macan
Turbo EV


Crossover ICE of the Year : Below RM 120K
PROTON X50
1.5TD Flagship


Crossover ICE of the Year : Above RM 120K
JAECOO J8 2WD


Crossover xEV of the Year : Below RM 120K
CHERY TIGGO CROSS
1.5 Hybrid CSH


Crossover xEV of the Year : Above RM 120K
JAECOO J7 PHEV


Sedan of the Year : Below RM 150K
PROTON Saga 1.5
Premium


Sedan of the Year :
RM 150K - RM 500K
Toyota Camry
XV80


MPV xEV of the Year
Zeekr 009
Ultra Luxury


Most Energy Efficient Vehicle
Chery Tiggo 8
PHEV 1.5 -FWD


Best Entry Level xEV of the Year
PROTON e.MAS 5
Premium


MPV ICE of the Year
Hyundai Staria 2.2
CRDi Prestige 7-seater


Pickup Truck of the Year
Ford Wildtrak 3.0
V6 Turbo Diesel


Hatchback of the Year
MINI Aceman SE


Performance Car of the Year
MG Cyberster
(Roadster)


Best xEV of the Year
Zeekr 009
Ultra Luxury


Best ICE Car of the Year
PROTON Saga
1.5 Premium


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


2025
CERTIFICATE


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025
CERTIFICATE


MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025



MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR



OF THE YEAR
2025

MALAYSIA
CAR
OF THE YEAR
2025


Judging Panel of
Malaysia Car of the Year 2025
Chips Yap
Founder/Editor of MotaAuto.com
Erywan Nor Shal
Founder of Motoqar
Gogulakannan Kandiah
Journalist and Owner of Bigwheels Malaysia
Hanif Su'ib
Senior Writer at Engear TV
Harjinder Singh
Lawyer, Motoring Industry Advisor, and

Automotive Awards Winners

Auto Ecosystem Awards Winners

LOTUS®

EMEYA 600

603
hp Power

250
km/h top speed

4.15
0 - 100kmh

600
km max range (WLTP)

@lotuscars.malaysia

www.lotuscars.com/en-MY

Visit
MalaysiaCarofTheYear.com
for more info about the upcoming award

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MARii working committee for Car of The Year
Moonman Events working committee Car of The Year

Mobilitiy Media
Timothy Ho
Shuen Lim

Research Analysts
Muhammad Yunus Shamsul Bahari

Advertising, Sales & Marketing
Jeff RS
Jonathan Lim Kok Heng
Nelly Andreyanna

CREDITS

Editor & Publisher
Yamin Vong

Advisor
Azrul Reza Aziz, MARii

Consultant
Cyril Pereira, Telesis Consulting Ltd

Graphic Designer
Mahira Mulio

Printer
Gillin Printers Sdn Bhd

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

MALAYSIA CAR OF THE YEAR

Winners
21st Edition August 2024 ~ November 2025

Overall Car of The Year

Zeekr 009 Ultra Luxury

People's Choice Award

Proton X50 1.5TD Flagship

Automotive Person of The Year

Dato' Sri Zainal Abidin Ahmad