

Proton goes Dutch in electric car tie-up

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A Proton assembly line near Kuala Lumpur. Malaysian automaker Proton has said it will manufacture electric cars for eco-conscious markets in Europe and the United States, in a deal with Netherlands-based Detroit Electric

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The deal is expected to boost [Proton](#) revenue by 2.0 billion ringgit (548 million dollars) over the next four years, managing director Syed Zainal Abidin Syed Mohamad Tahir told state media.

Detroit Electric said that by 2012 it plans to sell more than 270,000 of the zero-emission [electric vehicles](#) in the US and Europe as well as China, priced from 23,000 to 33,000 dollars.

Its [chief executive officer](#) Albert Lam said the vehicles, powered by a lithium polymer battery, will have a single-charge range of between 180 kilometres (111 miles) and 325 kilometres depending on battery size.

He said he was confident in the project despite the global downturn which has seen car sales plummet globally.

"Our target audience are those who purchase practical and affordable vehicles. This makes our products fit the pockets of a very wide audience," he said in a statement late Monday.

Detroit Electric was an icon of the United States [auto industry](#) in the early 1900s, producing the first [electric cars](#). But it went bankrupt in 1939 and was revived by Lam and other shareholders in the Netherlands and the US last year.

Proton also said it was considering sell the vehicles -- based on its Persona and Gen.2 models -- in Malaysia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Proton was formed 25 years ago as part of an ambitious national industrialisation plan, but its market share has slumped in recent years as it floundered in a newly deregulated market.

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