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Meralco studies venture into e-vehicle production

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) is looking into the possibility of producing electric vehicles (EVs) to complete its e-vehicle supply chain offering with the advent of alternative vehicles in the country.

Meralco senior vice president Alfredo Panlilio said the company has been looking at the EV industry and identified that, apart from charging stations, e-vehicles are among the key pillars for the industry's future.

"Of course, charging station is a basic entry for Meralco but we are looking at if we can participate more in the entire ecosystem or value chain of EV," he said.

The company is currently looking into the viability of producing EV units for public utility use such as e-trikes, e-jeeps or e-bus.

"We are exploring whether that is something viable for us because there are also a lot of investments required to get into that. It's too early to tell now whether its something that we will get into," Panlilio said.

"We will continue to discuss projects, with LGUs (local government units) like the LGU of Mandaluyong and the like to continue with that (charging stations), but from the point of view of Meralco, we are even thinking of really creating what we call as M-Transport for electric vehicle," he said.

In December, Meralco announced

it is creating a subsidiary to engage in the business of owning, maintaining and operating transport service networks of charging stations, batteries and vehicles utilizing electric energy and other alternative energy sources.

So far, Meralco has identified a couple of EV concepts, one of which is being discussed with Mandaluyong LGU for about 3,000 to 4,000 e-trikes, Panlilio said.

"If we can find a partner potentially for the manufacturing side, then we can take a look at what are the numbers that can make it work. Right now, maybe e-trikes will be the main focus because it is the easiest to get into. It will be a challenge if you go into e-bus and e-jeeps because

it's a total redesign of the vehicles," he said.

Meralco's expansion into EV business is part of disrupting its traditional business which is power distribution.

The plan to get into EV production will provide consumers an alternative to fuel-fed vehicles and help the country catch up with EV developments abroad, Meralco president Oscar Reyes said.

"We know it will come and I think our intent is to help in the early development and acceleration of the potential of e-vehicles in the country because number 1, they are providing an alternative. Number two, it's aligned with the development overseas and it helps in environmental

sustainability," he said.

In 2013, Meralco first rolled out the country's first commercial EV charging station in its Pasig City compound, which is done in partnership with Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC).

Last year, the power distributor-through wholly-owned subsidiary MSERV - teamed up with MMPC to put up more EV charging stations in the offices of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The EV charging stations will be housed in four locations: DENR Central Office in Quezon City, DTI Office in Makati, as well as DENR Regional Offices in Cebu and Davao.

* TRANSPORTATION - E-VEHICLE

* MERALCO