

Cuba bets on China to develop public transport

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There is unlikely to be a Cuban who has not used a Chinese-made bus, car, or motorcycle in the last decade, which indicates the importance of Chinese transportation technologies to the Caribbean nation.

Now, Cuba hopes to solve its transportation problem with the help of the Asian nation.

Chinese products have been an important part of the Cuban transport system since 2005, when Yutong buses reached the island nation.

More recently, Minerva tricycles and electric bicycles, produced in Cuba in association with the Chinese Tianjin Dongxing Industrial and Commercial Group, have helped reduce the strain on the country's ailing public transport.

The Minerva electric bikes have also offered Cuban families an affordable alternative to cars, which tend to be very costly.

According to Cuban Minister of Transport Adel Yzquierdo, 500 three-wheelers are being used in several provinces of the country and a trial of electric three-

wheelers will begin next year.

“Electric vehicles are the future and we’re testing them, everything has to be proved, we already decided to try them (electric tricycles) and manufacture them in cooperation with the Chinese company,” Yzquierdo told Xinhua at the 3rd Edition of International Convention and Exhibition of Cuban Industry (CubaIndustria 2018).

The event, which closed on Friday, has become a platform for Cuba to showcase its industrial progress and negotiate new projects with foreign investors.

Exhibitors from 31 countries and representatives of 130 national companies and 84 foreign entities participated in this event which opened on Monday.

Seven Chinese companies attended the exhibition including Yutong, YTO International and Tianjin Dongxing Industrial and Commercial Group, the latter of which has been present in Cuba since 1999 when it signed an agreement with the Angel Villarreal Bravo Industrial Company (Minerva).

To date, the two companies have produced 53,000 mechanical and electric bikes, tricycles, and tools for the disabled.

Dongxing is now looking to the future and hopes to expand its production facilities on the island.

“Our next step is to continue satisfying the Cuban market and also generate more foreign currency for Cuba, since we are going to establish a joint venture at the end of this year to start producing new models at low prices and with high quality,” said Wei Yunpu, chairman of the Chinese firm.

The Dongxing executive believes the company’s greatest source of satisfaction is seeing ordinary people benefit from its affordable products.

Yzquierdo also thanked Yutong for their contribution to Cuba’s transport. At present, there are more than 8,600 Yutong buses on the streets of Cuba.

“We are doing well with Yutong buses and we are betting in the future with Yutong,” Yzquierdo said.

Yutong now hopes that its electric and hybrid buses can help Cuba save 40 percent more fuel in the future.

Wang Tong, a Yutong representative, said that the firm is considering setting up a new plant in the Mariel Special Economic Development Zone, Cuba’s flagship economic and foreign investment project.

“We hope to have more relations with the local bus factory CAISA with the creation of a joint venture. If this mutual company works well and we can manufacture buses of good quality we will have the possibility of exporting to other markets in Latin America,” said Wang.

Meanwhile, Wang Lebin, business manager of YTO International, told Xinhua that his company has been cooperating with Cuba for three years, initially exporting tractors and construction machinery.

The cooperation’s success has enabled expansion and the company now intends to grow its production.

“The goal is to remodel what exists today in that factory and establish an assembly line for its future operation so the country has its own tractor plant and sustainability,” said Wang.

For Cuba, the participation of Chinese and other foreign firms in CubaIndustria 2018 offers investment possibilities necessary for the island’s development and for the sustainability of its public transport.

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