

South Africa likely to produce first EV in 2026: Minister

South Africa's automotive industry will likely produce its first electric vehicle (EV) in 2026, the trade minister said on Monday, as he outlined plans for the country's green transport transition.



An electric car charging sign is seen in a car park at a petrol station in Sao Paulo, Brazil on 3 March 2018. *Reuters/Nacho Doce/File Photo*

The electrification of transport is one of the key pillars underpinning South Africa's Just Energy Transition (Jet) plan for a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

The Jet plan estimates that an investment of R128.1bn (\$6.84bn) would be needed from 2023–2027 for the transport sector to contribute meaningfully to South Africa's decarbonisation commitments.

South Africa is the largest automotive manufacturing hub on the African continent, hosting global brands such as Toyota, Isuzu, Volkswagen and Mercedes, among others.

It is also highly integrated into the global supply chain, drawing components from across the world and exporting the final consumer product to more than 150 countries worldwide.

"We're already producing hybrids but we anticipate that the first electric vehicles are likely to be produced already by

2026," Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel told journalists.

Based on discussions his department was having with the automakers, the first batch of EVs will be limited. Growth should then accelerate between 2026 and 2030, with only one manufacturer anticipating moving into battery electric vehicle production after 2030, he added without naming any brands.

In a 68-page EV plan, the government outlined steps to support the transition, such as government incentives, a temporary reduction on import duties for batteries in vehicles produced and sold in the domestic market, and the commercialisation of green hydrogen production as a source of sustainable fuel.

It will also reform network industries, including freight rail and ports and implement energy reforms.

The country's power crisis poses one of the risks as the country's state-power utility Eskom struggles to keep the lights on.

The effective bans on CO2-emitting vehicles from 2035 in key markets like the European Union and UK will be profound, as they absorb nearly half of South African auto production, the plan read.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

(Reporting by Nqobile Dladla; Editing by Sharon Singleton)

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