

Power switch

動力轉移

China plans to make diesel a more attractive choice for drivers

中國鼓勵更多車主購買柴油汽車

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Try to sell anything but a small hatchback in Europe without a diesel engine and sales will be limited. But in China, barring a few SUVs and Volkswagen taxis, passenger cars are strictly petrol; only some 10,000 diesel cars were sold in 2009, according to the latest available figures.

Until 1993, China was an oil exporter, but increasing demand, partially fuelled by the rising number of cars, means it now has to import about half its needs. As diesel delivers better fuel economy than petrol, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers says the government is to offer a subsidy of up to RMB5,000 to purchasers of diesel cars.

High upfront costs and limited infrastructure has meant uptake of alternative-energy vehicles has been slow. A government target of one million electric vehicles on the road by 2015 looks likely to fall way short. "Alternative fuels and propulsion technologies such as plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles are taking much longer to develop

to maturity than initially anticipated, and [diesel] could provide a stepping stone towards the longer-term alternatives," says Bill Russo, President and automotive consultant of international business consultancy Synergistics.

But implementation will not be easy; diesel supplies are currently geared towards commercial vehicles and its high sulphur content doesn't suit modern diesel cars.

Obvious winners will be European joint ventures with access to the most advanced engines. But Roger Gao of Great Wall Motor believes his company has an advantage over some rival Chinese manufacturers as it, along with Chery, Hawtai and SAIC, is already using diesel engines.

Whether companies decide to go it alone or switch to diesel through technology-sharing with foreign manufacturing partners, the benefits are substantial.

According to Bertel Schmitt, Editor-in-Chief of The Truth About Cars website: "Diesel is a fuel-saving technology that works immediately, not some day, maybe."

沒有配備柴油引擎的掀背小汽車，在歐洲市場會難以吸引買家；但中國的情況完全不同，除了部分款式的多功能運動車和福士的士，大部分汽車都只配備汽油引擎。根據最新數字顯示，2009年內地只賣出10,000部柴油汽車。

中國在1993年以前仍是石油輸出國。但隨著汽車數量上升，石油需求大幅增加，今天內地使用的汽油，有一半依靠外國入口。有見於柴油引擎的燃油效益勝於汽油引擎，據中國汽車工業協會表示，政府會為購買柴油汽車的車主，提供多達5,000人民幣的補貼。

另類能源汽車的成本較高，加上配套的基建不足，普及速度比預期慢。政府最初期望2015年會有100萬輛電動車在路上行走，但現時遠遠未達到目標。國際商業顧問公司Synergistics的主席兼汽車業顧問Bill Russo指出：「另類能源及推進技術，如插電式油電

混合車及油電混合車的發展，由起步至成熟，中間所花的時間遠比最初估計長；而（柴油）遂成為過渡到未來另類能源汽車的踏腳石。」

然而，要令柴油汽車普及起來，還有一些難題需要解決。現時市面上的柴油含硫量較高，主要供商業汽車使用，不適合新推出的柴油汽車。

政府推廣柴油汽車，最大得益者相信是歐洲品牌在中國的合資企業，尤其是擁有先進引擎技術的車廠。中國車廠方面，長城、奇瑞、華泰和上汽均擁有柴油引擎技術。因此，長城汽車的發言人認為，他們發展柴油汽車較其他中國車廠佔有優勢。

總括而言，內地車廠不管是決定獨力開發柴油引擎技術，抑或與外國合作夥伴分享技術，都可望帶來可觀收益。

網站The Truth About Cars的主編Bertel Schmitt指出：「柴油引擎是現成的省油方法，並非遙不可及的技術。」■



China now imports about half its oil to cope, in part, with the rising number of cars
由於汽車數量急升，中國耗用的汽油現有一半需依靠進口