

Tesla takes on Gulf gas guzzlers

Electric carmaker Tesla announced the opening of a new Gulf headquarters on Monday in Dubai, aiming to conquer an oil-rich region better known for gas guzzlers than environmentally friendly motoring.



Elon Musk, the co-founder and chief executive of the American firm seeking to revolutionise the electric car market, was in the affluent city-state to oversee the launch of the Gulf sales push.

"The time seems to be good to really make a significant debut in this region starting from Dubai," Musk told the World Government Summit under way in the emirate.

Services and logistic support

Dubai's official media office said that Musk met UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, who welcomed Tesla's decision to set up its regional headquarters in the city-state.

Mohammed, who is also the ruler of Dubai, instructed local authorities to provide Tesla "with the services and logistic support" it needs, said the media office.

Dubai is one of seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates.

The emirate has a population of 2.5 million people, most of them expatriates. Despite a state-of-the-art metro, many people in Dubai and across the energy-rich Gulf region prefer to get around in SUVs or other luxury cars known to burn a lot of petrol.

More cars per person than New York or London

Official figures released by Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority in 2015 showed that the number of vehicles in Dubai had doubled over the past eight years, leaving the Gulf emirate with more cars per person than New York or London.

If that trend continues, the number of vehicles registered could reach 2,2 million by 2020, when the emirate is due to host the Expo international trade fair.

Tesla announced last year plans to build self-driving technology into all its electric cars.

"My guess is probably that in 10 years it will be very unusual for cars to be built that are not fully autonomous," Musk told the Dubai summit on Monday.

Source: AFP

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