Vietnam automaker sends EVs to Laos for electric taxi service

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Vietnamese automaker VinFast on Friday sent 150 cars to neighboring Laos for the launch of an electric taxi service, months after starting a similar scheme at home.

The communist state's first homegrown car manufacturer is hoping to compete with EV giants such as Tesla, and is trying to crack international markets.

The taxi service in Laos will be run by Green and Smart Mobility JSC (GSM), which shares the same parent company as VinFast—the Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup.

"Laos is an ideal starting point for GSM to expand internationally," said GSM CEO Nguyen Van Thanh.

"GSM has set the goal to promote Vietnamese electric vehicles to global consumers."

The announcement follows the launch of Vingroup's electric taxi service in Vietnam in April.

The conglomerate is owned by Vietnam's richest man, Pham Nhat Vuong, who runs hotels, apartments and hospitals across the country.

But VinFast's international expansion has faced a rocky start.

Of the 11,300 vehicles it sold in the first half of 2023, 7,100 were bought by GSM.

The company listed on the Nasdaq in August, where its shares veered wildly.

At one point its valuation was greater than auto behemoths Ford and General Motors, before lurching back down.

In the third quarter, VinFast reported a net loss of $623 million.

But GSM says it aims to expand operations to 27 of 63 provinces and cities in Vietnam by the end of 2023, with a fleet of 30,000 electric taxis and over 90,000 electric scooters.