

Toyota unveils hybrid car push

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Takeshi Uchiyamada, executive vice president of Japanese automaker Toyota Motor, introduces the company's small car "iQ" based electric vehicle in Tokyo. Toyota plans to launch 11 new hybrid models by the end of 2012.

The world's top automaker Toyota Motor plans to launch 11 new hybrid models by the end of 2012, the company said Thursday, as the race to build more environmentally friendly vehicles heats up.

The planned vehicles, consisting of all-new and redesigned models, will expand Toyota's hybrid-engine range -- which runs on gasoline and electricity -- at a time when rivals such as Nissan are developing all-electric vehicles.

The automaker is eyeing annual sales of more than 50,000 units for a Prius-based plug-in hybrid to be launched by early 2012 in Japan, the United States and Europe, with a price tag of around 3 million yen

(36,045 dollars).

It is also planning to launch an all-electric vehicle based on its current iQ minicar, which will be introduced in Japan and Europe, with a China launch also under consideration.

Toyota's rivals have moved to embrace the nascent electric vehicle market, with Nissan soon to launch its all-electric Leaf, which produces no tailpipe emissions -- a car which has become the fulcrum of Nissan's green ambitions.

But Toyota has so far only dipped its toes into the all-electric market, with its president Akio Toyoda last week offering a cautious outlook, citing as a major obstacle the creation of a convenient recharging system.

His comments came as Toyota showcased its "RAV4 EV" concept vehicle that is on display at the Los Angeles Auto Show in the US this month.



A journalist drives Japanese automaker Toyota Motor company's small car "iQ" based electric vehicle in Tokyo. Toyota plans to launch 11 new hybrid models by the end of 2012, the company said Thursday, as the race to build more environmentally friendly vehicles heats up.

The all-electric version of Toyota's RAV4 sports utility vehicle was developed with [Tesla Motors](#), the US electric vehicle firm in which Toyota owns a 50-million-dollar stake.

The new plans come as the automaker works to rebuild an image plagued by safety recalls in the past year over unintended acceleration, engine, steering and brake problems. The recalls affected around 12 million vehicles in total.

Toyota added Thursday that it intends to introduce a fuel-cell powered sedan-type car around 2015 in the US, Europe and Japan. It is aiming for a price tag of under 10 million yen.

It is also ramping up efforts to develop next generation batteries that outperform current lithium-ion models.

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