

Japan electric car makers, utility plan battery-charge stations

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People inspect the Mitsubishi i-MiEv, a new electric microcar, at the New York Auto Show in April 2009 in New York City. Three Japanese electric car makers teamed up with the country's largest power company Wednesday to study ways to building a grid of battery charging stations for zero-emission vehicles.

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Nissan Motors, [Mitsubishi Motors](#) and Subaru-maker Fuji Heavy Industries said they would set up a committee with Tokyo [Electric Power Co.](#) (TEPCO) to discuss ways to standardise and promote their battery-charging technology.

The four companies said they were "aiming to standardise the power charge method and to popularise fast-speed charge stations, which are absolutely essential in promoting [electric vehicles](#) in Japan."

The three automakers have separately developed lithium-ion batteries together with TEPCO, the largest utility in Asia, for their plug-in electric vehicles, which started hitting the market this year.

"We believe it is important that the industry becomes united, cooperates and collaborates," said Nissan's senior vice president Minoru Shinohara.

"I think it's important that all parties concerned go beyond the boundaries of their industries and work together," he told a joint news conference.

The three automakers have led efforts to commercialise electric vehicles.

Mitsubishi in June launched its i-MiEV, with a annual global sales target of 6,000 units in the year to March 2011.

Fuji Heavy introduced its own Subaru Plug-in Stella in June and has said it expects to sell an initial 170 units by next March.

Nissan, meanwhile, last weekend showed off its first electric car, the "Leaf" hatchback, and said it expects to market the model in late 2010 in Japan, Europe and the United States.

TEPCO, a major nuclear power provider, has said it is gradually replacing its corporate fleet by buying or leasing as many as 3,000 in total of the Mitsubishi and Subaru electric vehicles.

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