Mitsubishi To Triple Electric Car Output

TOKYO (AP) — Mitsubishi Motors Corp. said Tuesday it aims to more than triple annual production of its electric car — the i-MiEV — over the next three years, anticipating robust global demand for the zero-emission vehicle.

Mitsubishi will make some 9,000 i-MiEVs in the upcoming fiscal year starting April 1, some 18,000 in the following year and 30,000 in the fiscal year starting April 2012, said company spokesman Yuki Murata.

Japan's No. 4 automaker began selling the i-MiEV in Japan last year. It sold 1,400 of the electric vehicles in Japan between July 2009 and March 2010, and 250 during the same period abroad, mainly in Britain and Hong Kong.

Mitsubishi will sell the i-MiEV in the U.S. in the fiscal year starting April 2011, said Murata.

The i-MiEV can be recharged from a regular home socket, and can run up to 100 miles (160 kilometers) after charging seven hours at 200 volts.

But it costs 4.59 million yen ($51,000), more than twice as much as Toyota Motor Corp.'s new Prius hybrid, which is just over 2 million yen.

Mitsubishi has acknowledged the price for the i-MiEV may be too expensive for most people. Murata said the company aims to bring down the price to the two million yen level.

Mitsubishi's bigger rival, Nissan Motor Co., has unveiled its electric car, the Leaf, which will go into mass production globally in 2012. Nissan has yet to announce a price tag for the Leaf, which has a range of 100 miles (160 kilometers) on a single battery charge.

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