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MARKET NEWS | Sun Nov 6, 2016 | 8:49pm EST

Toyota, in about-face, may mass-produce long-range electric cars -Nikkei

Nov 7 Toyota Motor Corp is looking at mass-producing long-range electric vehicles (EVs) that would hit the market around 2020, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Monday, in what would be a dramatic reversal in strategy for the world's top-selling automaker.

Even as rivals such as Nissan Motor Co and Volkswagen AG have touted pure electric cars as the most viable zero-emission vehicles for the future, Toyota has said it would reserve EVs for short-distance commuting given the high price of rechargeable batteries and lengthy charging times.

By adding longer-range EVs to its product range, Toyota would be changing its tune from promoting plug-in petrol-electric hybrid cars and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles (FCVs) as the most promising alternative to conventional cars.

The Nikkei business daily, without citing sources, said Toyota would set up a team in early 2017 dedicated to developing electric cars that can travel more than 300 km (186 miles) on a single charge.

Plans under consideration include using an existing vehicle platform such as that of the Prius hybrid car or Corolla for the EV, the Nikkei said.

The paper added that Toyota aims to begin selling its first long-range EV in 2020 in Japan, which will host the summer Olympics that year, as well as other markets such as California where automakers are required to sell a certain portion of zero-emission cars.

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Toyota said it would issue a response to the report later on Monday.

Battery-run cars like the Nissan Leaf have short driving ranges and require long charging times, reducing their attractiveness for customers planning to drive longer distances frequently.

Toyota has promoted FCVs as the most sensible next-generation option since they have a similar driving range and refuelling time to conventional cars, but the lack of hydrogen fuelling stations poses a major

hurdle for mass consumption. (Reporting by Chang-Ran Kim; Editing by Edwina Gibbs)



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YENAGOA, Nigeria, May 20 A Nigerian labour union that had called for the shutdown of all Exxon Mobil Corp facilities in the Niger Delta has suspended its strike at its Rivers state branch in the oil production hub, two union representatives said on Saturday.

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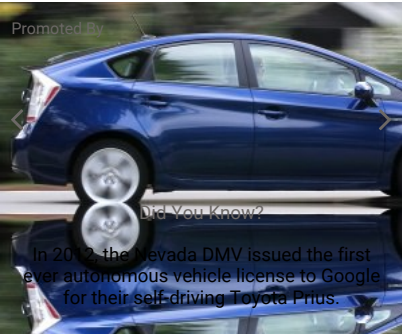
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