# Toshiba to develop batteries for electric vehicles

YURI KAGEYAMA - AP Business Writer - Associated Press

Japanese electronics maker Toshiba Corp. said Friday it's jumping into the battery business for electric vehicles in a development deal with Mitsubishi Motors Corp.

It's the first EV battery deal with a major automaker for Toshiba, which already makes batteries for laptops and cell phones, said company spokesman Ken Shinjo. Production will start sometime next year, in a new facility in Niigata, northern Japan, according to Toshiba.

Green vehicles are drawing interest because of concerns about global warming and pollution, setting off a competition among electronics makers — as well as automakers — in hybrids, plug-ins and electric vehicles.

The Japanese so far have a head start in supplying such batteries. They say they see that as a chance for an edge over rivals because only a handful of battery makers have the technology so far to supply automakers.

But automakers can also hope to play the electronics makers against each other to bring down costs.

Toshiba's Japanese rival Panasonic Corp. supplies batteries for Toyota Motor Corp., the world's top automaker, while NEC Corp. does it for Nissan Motor Co. Sanyo Electric Co., a Panasonic subsidiary, has deals with Volkswagen AG, Honda Motor Co. and Toyota.

Shinjo said Toshiba was in talks with other automakers, while declining to say which ones. Toshiba's lithium-ion battery, called SCiB, offers safety, rapid recharging and a long life, Tokyo-based Toshiba said.

Mitsubishi, which started selling Japan's first mass-market electric car, the four-seater bubble-shaped i-MiEV, earlier this year, said it had not yet decided whether it will use Toshiba's battery in one of its EVs, but they were working on a battery together.

Mitsubishi now gets its batteries from a joint venture with Japanese battery maker GS Yuasa Corp., but is hoping to expand its model lineup in electric vehicles, said spokesman Tetsuji Inoue.

Nissan has already received 20,000 orders for its electric vehicle, the Leaf, going on sale in the U.S. and Japan, with first deliveries set for December, spokesman Mitsuru Yonekawa said.

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