

# Motoring

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## Electricity's future on display

Chengdu auto show showcases latest eco-friendly vehicles

By CAO YINGYING  
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Global carmakers showcased their determination to shift toward electrification and prospects of the new energy vehicles in the world's largest auto market at the 22nd Chengdu Motor Show in Sichuan province, running from Sep 5 to 14.

German carmaker Mercedes-Benz announced on Thursday that the Mercedes-Benz EQC, its first fully electric sports utility vehicle model, opens to booking. The EQC is scheduled to be delivered to Chinese customers in November as German auto giant dashes forward into electrification.

Equipped with the MBUX intelligent man-machine interactive system, the EQC can optimize navigation routes based on the real-time information about energy consumption, road conditions and the service condition of charging stations.

Mercedes-Benz said it is to provide tailored electric auto services for Chinese customers, including installing intelligent charging piles, providing public charging piles and Mercedes-Benz exclusive charging stations, as well as a 24-hour road rescue charging service.

BMW is another German auto magnate that affirmed its determination to develop electrification.

"BMW has announced that by 2023, it will launch 25 electric vehicle models. And most of them will come to China," said Johann Wiedland, president and CEO of BMW Brilliance Automotive, in an interview at the Chengdu auto show.

Its joint venture in China, BMW Brilliance will produce the BMW iX3 — the first fully electric model of the BMW X family — in Shenyang next year, which is a big step for the company. The BMW iX3 is produced for the world, Wiedland added.

With the country cutting subsidies for new energy vehicles in late June, the new energy vehicle sector has shown signs of a slowdown. According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, sales of new energy vehicles in China fell for the first time in 30 months, sliding 4.7 percent in July from a year earlier.

The association cut its whole-year sales estimate from 1.6 million to 1.5 million for the new energy vehicle sector.

Facing fluctuations in the Chinese new energy market, Wiedland noted that the long-term trend of electrification is absolutely right, and that he believed the sales of electric cars and hybrids will continue growing.



Dongfeng Renault Automotive Company launches its first electric car K-ZE at the Chengdu auto show. CAO YINGYING / CHINA DAILY



Mercedes-Benz's new energy vehicle model EQC is expected to be delivered in China in November. ZHANG DANDAN / CHINA DAILY

The CEO added that the new energy market needs sustainable solutions, which refer to high-quality products, solid working processes, correct company structures and an appropriate level of growth.

"We have seen a lot of electric car startups. And so far, they have used a lot of money," Wiedland noted. "Now, it looks like that they are running out of money. If you want to change, you have to create a sustainable solution here for China, which is also the same all over the world."

Chris Chen, vice-president of Chery Jaguar Land Rover, has similar concerns.

He said that with policy changes and traditional carmakers launching more new energy products, electric startups are facing fiercer

competition and feeling the pressure associated with the great challenges of operation and management.

"The new energy vehicle sector still will develop at a high speed since its market share is too low in China," Chen said.

Chery Jaguar Land Rover plans to provide electric variants for all of its models by 2020, said Murray Dietsch, president of Chery Jaguar Land Rover, at the auto show.

The company's Changshu plant in Jiangsu province is being prepared for the production of the new energy vehicles.

To take a share of the spoils in Chinese new energy vehicle market, carmakers are also utilizing their global resources to assuage

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customers' concerns about mileage and safety problems.

Sino-French joint venture Dongfeng Renault Automotive Company launched its first electric car, K-ZE at the Chengdu auto show, with a suggested retail price from 61,800 yuan (\$8,688).

Wei Wenqing, the new executive vice-president of Dongfeng Renault, said suitable mileage is better than long mileage for electric vehicles.

"Electric vehicles carrying heavy battery packs sometimes is a waste. The small electric SUV K-ZE is designed with the range of 271 kilometers at a balance point," Wei said on Thursday.

As one of the world's leaders of electric vehicles, Renault has now sold more than 250,000 units, with zero fire accidents.

Although the joint venture is relatively new in China, the resources of Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Alliance and Dongfeng Renault will spur the addition of more electric models cov-

ering different segments in the coming years to provide safe products to Chinese customers, Wei added.

The event showcases other electric products including GAC NE's intelligent SUV Aion LX, GAC Honda's first mass-produced pure electric sedan iA5, Aiyways' U5 SUV and Xpeng Motors' P7 model, which plans to deliver in first half of next year.

Some carmakers believe the electric technology is not mature yet to meet high demands of driving performance and the passion of acceleration.

Francesco Scardaoni, managing director of Lamborghini China, said in an interview the weight of the pure electric power system affects the handling of sports cars, and performance-wise, cannot last long. Scardaoni said such restrictions are not acceptable for Lamborghini's sports cars.

The luxury brand will consider electric technology in the future, when there are greater technological breakthroughs.

They plan to launch a new model with hybrid power system at the transition period, Scardaoni said.

According to the event's organizers, more than 130 automakers have showcased over 1,600 vehicles at the ongoing Chengdu auto show to attract customers and expand the auto market in Southwest China.

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## BJEV advocates battery swap service for e-vehicle owners

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China's largest electric car maker BJEV is championing the battery swap service as reduced government subsidies, long charging times and battery-induced fire accidents are discouraging potential buyers in the world's biggest new energy vehicle market.

"We plan to invest more than 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) to build 3,000 battery swap stations capable of serving 500,000 electric vehicles by the end of 2022," said Ma Fanglie, president of BJEV, at an industry forum in early September.

Batteries have remained the most precious part of electric vehicles, usually accounting for 50 percent of their tag prices.

But for vehicles capable of the technology, customers don't have to buy the batteries, which will make sense financially when the government slashes subsidies, he said.

China began offering subsidies on new energy vehicle purchases in 2009 but has planned to stop them by the end of 2020.

The cost of electric vehicle ownership will be higher than gasoline



BJEV showcases its EC3 electric car at the Shanghai auto show in April. LI FUSHENG / CHINA DAILY

cars until 2025, according to analysts.

"We will separate the batteries from vehicles and lease them to car owners, making the cars much more affordable," Ma said.

BJEV is currently offering three models capable of the technology, including the EU260 and EU300 sedans.

Ma said batteries at the swap stations feature trickle charging, which will also help save money by extending batteries' life by 30 to 60 percent over those charged using the commonplace high-voltage, fast-charging technology.

Trickle charging is also expected to increase battery safety.

Statistics show that about 75

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Ma Fanglie, president of BJEV

3,000 battery swap

stations are expected to be established in China by BJEV by the end of 2022

percent of fire accidents involving models from such brands as Tesla occur when the vehicles are being charged.

Battery swap also saves electric car owners the trouble of waiting for a long time.

For many models in the market, it would take at least 40 to 50 minutes to reach an 80 percent charge, but it takes just three minutes to get a battery swapped.

### Short Torque

#### Parallel imports hoped to boost auto industry

China has decided to expand a pilot program of parallel auto imports to offer customers more choice and further open up its auto industry. Authorized whole-vehicle ports whose annual car imports top 1,000 units can apply to enjoy parallel auto import policies, according to a guideline released by the Ministry of Commerce and six other government agencies. Each provincial region should have no more than five pilot enterprises in principle, the guideline said. For parallel imports, independent auto dealers directly purchase vehicles from a foreign production base or auto dealer. Prices for parallel import cars are lower than the prices offered by authorized dealers.

#### Chinese electric cars to be sold in Israel

Chinese electric cars will be sold for the first time in Israel starting in the first quarter of 2020, with an Israeli dealership to offer models of GAC Motor, China's leading automaker, the Hebrew-language newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported on Thursday. The GAC Motor electric car models that will be sold in Israel are the Aion S and Trumpchi GE3. The Israeli importing company for GAC electric cars will be a new subsidiary of Union Group, a Toyota-Israeli car importer located in the coastal city of Tel Aviv. Later in 2020, electric car models of Chinese carmakers MG Motor, JAC Motors and Nevs are also expected to enter Israel.

#### BYD launches latest electric models

China's largest new energy vehicle maker BYD launched its e2 model last week in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. The compact pure electric sedan is aimed at younger customers and is equipped with the DiLink 2.0 intelligent connectivity system. The car body is 4,240 millimeters long, with a wheelbase of 2,610 mm. To make customers feel secure about the electric car, BYD uses its e-platform and the car can travel a distance of up to 405 kilometers on one charge. BYD will offer four variants of the e2 at prices ranging from 89,800-119,800 yuan (\$12,608-\$16,820).

#### S Korea's vehicle sales struggle in August

South Korea's automobile sales fell last month on weak demand both at home and abroad, industry data showed last week. The number of cars sold and made by five domestic automakers, including Hyundai, Kia, Ssangyong, GM Korea and Renault Samsung, was 639,435 in August, down 2.9 percent from a year earlier. Auto exports reduced 2.1 percent over the year to 520,956 in August, while domestic car sales shrank 6.2 percent to 118,479 in the month. Hyundai's global car sales diminished 6.2 percent over the year to 363,045 last month, including 52,897 at home and 310,148 abroad. Kia's auto sales gained 2.1 percent to 228,871 in the month, including 43,362 at home and 185,509 abroad.

#### Xuanyuan Award nominations underway

Nominations for the 7th Xuanyuan Award started last week in Beijing. Eligible nominations will include China-made models and imported new energy vehicles from Nov 2018 to Oct 2019. Organized by China's Auto Business Review magazine and Austria's consulting firm EFS, the annual award was established in 2013 to evaluate new cars in China from different aspects. This year's winners will be announced in December after more than three months of tests and evaluation by a 10-member jury as well as design, technology and media consultants. Jack Yu, editor-in-chief of Auto Business Review, said the award was designed to help drive China's automotive industry. Last year, it received 35 nominations, with Roewe's electric Marvel X taking home the top award.