



## Renault-Nissan inks electric car deal for Israel

The Renault-Nissan alliance yesterday signed a deal to begin mass-producing electric cars as part of an Israeli-led project to develop alternative energy sources and slash oil dependency.

Renault-Nissan Chief Executive Carlos Ghosn said the cars, with a range of about 100km in city driving and up to 160km on the highway, will accelerate from zero to 100 km/h in 13 seconds and will have a top speed of 110 km/h, similar to many petrol-powered cars.

Mr Ghosn said a key reason why the company chose Israel to launch the project is because 90 per cent of Israelis drive less than 70km a day and all major urban centres are within 150km of each other. For Israel the cars would mean less dependency on oil imports, mostly from Russia.

The cars, to be made in Europe, will run on a battery developed by Nissan and Japan's NEC and

will be available in 2011.

A prototype is already on the road in Israel and various models will be sold by Renault and Nissan.

"It will be the most environmentally friendly mass-produced car on the market," Mr Ghosn said at a Fuel Free Transportation ceremony at the office of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

He said the main appeal of the cars was that they were as "normal as possible" while operating quietly.

He said the car would cost the same or less than comparable petrol powered cars and would have a lifetime warranty.

Mr Ghosn said Renault-Nissan will also market the cars in yet-to-be-determined European countries and Asia and later in the US.

"We expect this car to be successful," he told reporters.

"We want to make sure we mass market 10,000 to 20,000 cars a year in Israel ... we are determined to make it a success."

Israel's Government will offer tax incentives on the cars and Project Better Place, a venture-backed company, will set up a recharging grid using electricity from renewable sources.

"The state of Israel has set itself the goal of making our lives here better and cleaner, with less dependence on gasoline and petroleum," Mr Olmert said.

"By the end of the next decade, we will be completely free of petroleum and its byproducts as the fuel which powers transportation in Israel."

Project Better Place is headed by former SAP executive Shai Agassi, who said Israel's grid would be powered by 200MW, generated by wind and solar power sources. — Reuters