

autobuzz

Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo



Lexus's next-generation battery EV LF-ZC concept



Japanese automaker Daihatsu's concept car OSANPO



The AFEELA Prototype from Sony Honda Mobility

Japan's first fully autonomous vehicle project suspended

AFP | Tokyo

Japan's first pilot project of a fully autonomous self-driving vehicle has been suspended after a minor accident with a parked bicycle, officials said.

It is the latest blow to efforts worldwide to promote driverless vehicles, a technology with particular potential benefits in ageing Japan.

The driverless bus-like vehicle, similar to an electric golf cart, started operations in Eihei-ji in Fukui prefecture in central Japan in May.

This was after Japan last year allowed Level 4 self-driving vehicles on public roads, meaning that they can operate only within a limited

area.

On Sunday it hit a bicycle that was parked on a roadside, said local official Norifumi Hiramoto.

None of the four passengers was injured and the vehicle developers are investigating the cause, he said.

"We are suspending the operation until the cause of the incident becomes clear," he said. A Fukui police spokesman confirmed the accident caused no injuries.

The vehicle, designed to avoid obstacles

with sensors and radars, has been driving at a maximum speed of 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) per hour.

The suspension comes just days after California authorities suspended testing of driverless cars as robotaxis by General Motors's Cruise subsidiary following a series of accidents and other problems.

Like other industrial countries, Japan has been exploring the

possibility of allowing self-driving technologies on public roads.

Japan, which is considering easing a ban on ride-hailing services to alleviate a shortage of taxi drivers, aims to allow Level 4 vehicles in 50 locations within three years.



BYD posts record quarterly profit



Chinese automaker BYD's sports sedan BYD SEAL is displayed during the press day of the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo

AFP | Beijing

China's top electric carmaker BYD announced a record quarterly profit Monday, underscoring the firm's growing dominance in a high-tech sector that is fiercely contested by both domestic and foreign competitors.

The Shenzhen-based firm posted a profit of 10.4 billion yuan (\$1.42 billion) for the July-September period, its highest-ever earnings during a single quarter and up 82 percent on-year, a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange showed.

The figure was in line with BYD's previous forecast of between 9.55 billion yuan and 11.55 billion yuan in quarterly earnings.

BYD's cumulative net profit for January-September reached 21.4 billion yuan, more than doubling on-year and sur-

passing last year's total annual earnings of 16.6 billion yuan.

Electric vehicle demand has soared in recent years in China, which is the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases in absolute terms.

BYD, whose investors include US investment titan Warren Buffet, wants its sales to be dominated by electric and hybrid vehicles by 2035.



BYD ceased production of gasoline-powered cars last year, and is now focusing exclusively on hybrid and electric models.

Car drivers torture NZ city with Celine Dion songs

AFP | Wellington, New Zealand

Car drivers armed with a playlist of Celine Dion songs have been plaguing residents of a small New Zealand city for months on end with loud, late-night "siren battles".

The beloved Canadian singer's melodies lose their charm when blared at high volume as late as 2 am, say the sleepless residents of Porirua, north of Wellington and home to 60,000 people.

"It's a headache," Porirua Mayor Anita Baker told AFP on Thursday.

Siren battles have erupted in parts of New Zealand for at least seven years.

Local media have reported on contestants -- often people with family links to Pacific Island nations -- using large siren-type



Canadian singer Celine Dion performs on the opening night of her new world tour "Courage" at the Videotron Centre in Quebec City

speakers on cars and even bicycles to drown each other out with their powerful systems.

They "love Celine Dion", the

mayor said. "They like anyone with a high pitch and great tone in their voice," she said.

In Porirua, people have had enough of hearing the power ballads, including "My Heart Will Go On" and "It's All Coming Back To Me Now".

The contests start as early as 7 pm and can go on until as late as 2 am, the mayor said.

"It's really loud music. They only play a quarter of the song, so it's like having a turntable and it comes screeching out."

Competing cars park with their engines running, blasting out music before moving to avoid police, Baker said.

'Not getting any sleep'

"It's happening down in our city centre, which is like a basin, so the noise just goes out like a drum to all the suburbs," she said.

"People are just not getting

any sleep, because it's all hours."

Nearly 300 disgruntled residents have so far signed a petition on the website change.org demanding Porirua City Council put a stop to it.

"There is a petition coming my way, but I have already had lots of emails and complaints through," Baker said.

One resident, Diana Paris, wrote on the petition she was "sick" of the noise.

"Although I enjoy Celine Dion in the comfort of my lounge and at my volume, I do not enjoy hearing fragments of it stopping and starting at any time between 7 pm and 2 am," she said.

Baker said the late-night music sessions started in November 2022 during the Rugby League World Cup when local fans celebrated Samoa's run to the final.

"We had a parade down here and they have just continued on. Summer is starting and they are back."

There are no set nights when the high-decibel music will start up, she said. "It's absolutely random now and it can be any day of the week."

Baker has attended organised siren battles.

"I can see why they like them, they are a bit of fun. There were families watching and it finished at 10 pm, not one or two in the morning when people need to sleep."

The mayor said she would meet with police to find a resolution.

"We don't want people leaving the city because of the noise. That's unacceptable," she said. ryj/djw/lb