

BMW raises i3 electric car production 43%

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Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, the world's largest maker of luxury vehicles, has increased production of the i3 electric city car 43% to meet demand that has exceeded the carmaker's initial expectations.

The premium manufacturer in recent weeks has raised daily output to 100 vehicles from about 70 previously at the factory in Leipzig, Germany, where the model is assembled, Harald Krueger, BMW's production chief, said in an e-mail to Bloomberg.

BMW has already built more than 5,000 i3s since the start of the year, Krueger said. The current production rate translates to about 20,000 vehicles for the full year, almost twice as much as BMW's initial sales forecast.

BMW began rolling out the i3 last November and will begin bringing the i8 hybrid sports car to market in June. Both vehicles have a carbon fiber chassis to cut weight and improve fuel efficiency. The Munich-based automaker said in February that it's building a second production hall at a jointly run plant with SGL Carbon SE to boost assembly of the material.

"Following the market introduction in Europe, we're now rolling out the i3 in the US," Krueger said in the statement. "The US will be the largest market for the i3."

Chief financial officer Friedrich Eichiner said in October the company was considering a production increase for the model after early demand exceeded expectations. BMW said at the time it had 11,000 orders for the compact car, which will cost US\$41,350 (RM133,439) in the US, and aimed to sell more than 10,000 in 2014.

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