

Trump wants U.S. to have tiny 'kei' cars after Japan trip

8th December 2025



A momentous change might be coming to American roads following a visit to Japan by U.S. President Donald Trump. America's ubiquitous, muscular SUVs may soon be usurped by a four-seater, 660 cc car that is hugely popular in Japan — the "kei car". President Trump seems to have developed a particular fondness for this miniature automobile. He wants to pave the way for kei cars to be manufactured in the USA. He wrote on his Truth Social website: "I have just approved tiny cars to be built in America. Manufacturers have long wanted to do this, just like they are so successfully built in other countries." He added that the cars were "inexpensive, safe, fuel efficient, and quite simply, amazing".

In Japan, kei cars account for around a third of all new vehicle sales. They are ideally suited to the narrow streets of Japan's bustling, densely populated cities. However, legislation needs to be passed to make the cars road-legal in the USA. The website Quartz reported that: "Most kei cars don't clear federal rules, and there are lingering concerns that the vehicles are too small and slow to be driven safely...on highways." Trump has directed his Transportation Secretary, Sean Duffy, to remove all barriers to their production. Mr Duffy said: "If Toyota or any other company wants to make smaller, more affordable and fuel-efficient cars, we have cleared the deck so they can...sell them in America."

Sources: japantimes.co.uk / qz.com / newsweek.com

Writing

There is no need for car engines to be more powerful than 1,000 cc. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

momentous / change / American roads / SUVs / 650 cc cars / built in America / cars / vehicle sales / narrow streets / densely populated / barriers / fuel efficient / affordable

True / False

- 1) The article said the USA is going to make its roads narrower. T / F
- 2) The maximum engine size of a Japanese kei car is 660 cc. T / F
- 3) President Donald Trump wants more pavements in the USA. T / F
- 4) Donald Trump said Japan's kei cars were "simply amazing". T / F
- 5) Around half of all new cars in Japan are kei cars. T / F
- 6) It is legal to drive kei cars on American highways. T / F
- 7) Donald Trump said he wants barriers removed on American roads. T / F
- 8) The US Transportation Secretary hopes the USA can sell kei cars. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1. momentous | a. remaining |
| 2. ubiquitous | b. low-priced |
| 3. usurped | c. very common |
| 4. pave the way | d. laws |
| 5. inexpensive | e. prepare for |
| 6. suited | f. worries |
| 7. legislation | g. important |
| 8. lingering | h. matched |
| 9. concerns | i. economical |
| 10. fuel-efficient | j. took over |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of cars?
- b) What do you think of SUVs and other large cars?
- c) Are smaller or larger cars best?
- d) What are the roads like in your country?
- e) What do you think of the four-seater, 660 cc kei car?
- f) How would you like to change roads in your country?
- g) Should we limit the engine size of cars?
- h) Do you think Americans will like tiny cars?

Phrase Match

1. A momentous change
 2. America's ubiquitous, muscular
 3. a four-seater,
 4. developed a particular fondness
 5. safe, fuel efficient, and quite simply,
 6. kei cars account for around a third
 7. They are ideally suited
 8. legislation needs to be passed to
 9. there are lingering
 10. remove all barriers to their
- a. for this miniature automobile
 - b. production
 - c. of all new vehicle sales
 - d. make the cars road-legal
 - e. 660 cc car
 - f. might be coming
 - g. concerns
 - h. amazing
 - i. SUVs
 - j. to the narrow streets

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Should large cars be banned in cities?
- c) How can we encourage people to buy tiny cars?
- d) What are the safety concerns regarding tiny cars?
- e) What do you think of Japanese cars?
- f) What's your favourite car?
- g) What will cars be like in 20 years from now?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a kei car manufacturer?

Spelling

1. A temnmsoou change might be coming
2. America's tuquibuiso, muscular SUVs
3. euurpds by a four-seater, 660 cc car
4. nmetiuar automobile
5. fmcauterunsar have long wanted to do this
6. fuel cfifitnee
7. a third of all new lcheeiv sales
8. Japan's unsglitb, densely populated cities
9. taieilglons needs to be passed
10. edaferl rules
11. there are gnigrienl concerns
12. more aodffaelrb

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. c	3. j	4. e	5. b
6. h	7. d	8. a	9. f	10. i

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	Where did President Trump go that sparked his interest in kei cars?
2.	What is the engine size of the kei cars?
3.	What has President Trump developed?
4.	On what platform did President Trump write about the kei cars?
5.	What did President Trump say car makers have long wanted to do?
6.	How many of Japan's new vehicle sales are kei cars?
7.	What in Japan are kei cars suited to?
8.	What kind of concerns are there about kei cars in the USA?
9.	What did President Trump ask the Transportation Secretary to remove?
10.	What did the US Transportation Secretary say has been cleared?

Speaking – Japanese Things

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Kei cars
- Origami
- Manga
- Matcha
- Karaoke
- Bullet trains
- Capsule toys
- Sushi

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.