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MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC ANNOUNCES DEVELOPMENT OF NEW USER INTERFACE FOR ON-BOARD CAR INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Tokyo, February 15, 2005 – Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (President and CEO: Tamotsu Nomakuchi) announced today the development of a prototype on-board information system enabling drivers to easily search through vast amounts of music, video, car navigation and other content. This system is designed to give drivers a safer and more comfortable driving experience: all operations are accessible in a steering wheel remote control right where your hand is located; there is a function to search for music desired by the driver or suited to the environment outside; and the system can provide a driving environment tailored to the driver's preferences.

Background to development

On-board information systems like car entertainment and car navigation systems are starting to come with hard disk drives, enabling the storage and use of large amounts of content. At the same time, accessing this content may keep the driver busier operating these devices in the car, causing him to pay less attention to driving, and consequently standards are placing stronger limits on the ways in which on-board devices can be operated while the car is moving.

We have responded by developing a new on-board information system user interface that emphasizes safety.

Major development results

1. Assuring safety with a new steering wheel remote control system making all operations accessible where your hand is located

The Design Center has created a new steering wheel remote control system that makes all operations accessible right where your hand is located. This enhances safety by keeping the driver from getting distracted while the car is in motion.

For example, when the driver touches the touch pad of the steering wheel remote control, designated music titles are read out. The driver can then choose songs by pressing the touch pad he is already touching. This means the driver can select music without even looking at the screen. Additionally, the driver can easily expand or shrink car navigation maps by turning the steering wheel remote control dial.

2. Reduced operating time with simple music selection function capable of finding music desired by the driver or suitable to the driving environment

Musical content is automatically classified by such factors as genre or tempo and recorded in the system. When the driver searches for music, a function that we developed suggests songs in the category desired by the driver, or songs that fit the outside environment. This function shortens the amount of time spent operating the system.

When the auto is in motion and safety is the most important consideration, the driver can simply use the steering wheel remote control to specify a category and then easily search for the desired music from a list of up to 3,000 songs. The system is also capable of automatically recommending the best music for the outside environment (i.e. the location, time, climate, etc. as determined by car navigation) and consistent with the driver's usage history.

3. Customization by automatic driver identification

A camera, mounted for example at the top of the car's meter panel, automatically identifies the driver and prompts the system to provide the driving environment preferred by the driver.

When the system recognizes the driver as "Father," for example, it can customize the meter design, coloring and so on to the preferences of the user named "Father." The system registers up to eight different people.

Further development

We envision that the expansion of technologies known as ITS¹ and Telematics² will make it increasingly common to broadcast music to vehicles and process data in automobiles while accelerating the applications of IT in autos. Given the trends, one matter of particular urgency is simplification of operating methods so that driving can still be safe even as the driver has to work more with devices.

Mitsubishi Electric will continue to research and develop pioneering operating devices and user interfaces and to generate new ideas for an enjoyable driving experience.

¹ITS: Intelligent Transportation Systems

²Telematics: A term created by combining telecommunications and informatics

Patents Japan: 2 claims filed; outside Japan: 1 claim filed.

About Mitsubishi Electric

With over 80 years of experience in providing reliable, high-quality products to both corporate clients and general consumers all over the world, Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (TSE:6503) is a recognized world leader in the manufacture, marketing and sales of electrical and electronic equipment used in information processing and communications, space development and satellite communications, consumer electronics, industrial technology, energy, transportation and building equipment. The company recorded consolidated group sales of 3,309 billion yen (US\$ 31.2billion*) in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004. For more information visit <http://global.mitsubishielectric.com>

*At an exchange rate of 106 yen to the US dollar, the rate given by the Tokyo Foreign Exchange Market on March 31, 2004.