Toyota, BMW Working Together On New Battery Tech

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TOKYO (AP) — Toyota Motor Corp. and BMW Group are working together on next-generation batteries for green vehicles called "lithium-air" as their collaboration, first announced in late 2011, moves ahead in fuel cells, sports vehicles and other fields.

But both sides said Thursday the partnership will not involve a capital alliance while spanning a wide range of technologies for green vehicles.

The Japanese and German automakers aim to complete a fuel-cell vehicle system by 2020, and a concept for a mid-size sports vehicle by the end of this year. They will also work together on developing lightweight technologies such as composites, which will help make cars greener.

Joint research will be started to develop a lithium-air battery, which will be more powerful than the current lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles, they said. The technology, which other automakers are also working on, will allow a major part of the battery's energy-making process to come from the oxygen in air.

BMW AG board member Herbert Diess told reporters the cooperation will help both companies boost competitiveness in new technologies.

"We really share the same vision," he said at a news conference in Nagoya, central Japan, live-streamed at Toyota's Tokyo office.

Toyota Vice Chairman Takeshi Uchiyamada said working with BMW will allow for a much faster development as they pool their resources.

He said the companies share a corporate culture and they have built trust over the last year. An agreement to work on technologies together was signed in June last year.

BMW, known for its strong design and sporty cars, could be a good match for Toyota, reputed for innovation and solid engineering but sometimes criticized as making dull cars.

Global automakers are forging such partnerships to become more competitive.

French carmaker PSA Peugeot Citroen and General Motors Co. of the U.S. have a deal to share in purchases of parts and services to cut costs. Toyota already has a joint venture with Peugeot Citroen to make small cars in Europe.

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