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Headline: Japanese electric-car developer signs research MoUs in Thailand

FOMM Corporation of Japan yesterday signed an MoU with Thammasat University's Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology to do joint research focused on the evaluation of the compact electric car, and a second MoU with Bangchak Petroleum on a feasibility study on a 'battery cloud' system utilising Bangchak's service stations. FOMM is also providing a prototype of its EV to SIIT for R&D purposes.

Japanese electric-car developer signs research MoUs in Thailand

ASINA PORNWASIN
THE NATION

FOMM Corporation, a Japanese company involved in development of electric vehicles (EVs), yesterday signed two joint-research memoranda of understanding with Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology of Thammasat University and Bangchak Petroleum.

One MoU is between FOMM and SIIT to do joint research for one year evaluating electric vehicles. The other is between FOMM and Bangchak to undertake a study on implementation of a "battery cloud" system for FOMM compact vehicles by utilising Bangchak's service stations.

The main purposes of this collaboration are the development of EV efficiency, driving convenience, basic infrastructure, and a future Thai EV industry. In addition, Bangchak will participate in a feasibility study on a "battery cloud" system and general maintenance services at its service-station network. Under FOMM's "battery cloud" concept, batteries for its EVs can be charged at home or be replaced at service stations.

A fully charged battery can run the EV for up to 100 kilometres. The batteries are designed to allow smartphones monitor the remaining power.

The collaboration is part of FOMM's strategy to use Thailand as the hub for manufacturing compact electric cars to sell in Thailand and elsewhere in Asean.

According to a survey on worldwide EV demand since 2011, the initial number of 40,000 units dramatically increased to 265,000 units in 2013. This demand is expected to soar to around 541,000 units in 2018.

FOMM is committed to building compact EVs that are a cross between an automobile and a motorcycle.

Hideo Tsurumaki, chief executive officer of FOMM – whose name is an acronym of "First One Mile Mobility" – said the core technologies of FOMM's EV included in-wheel motors, high-power cooling systems, and cassette-type batteries.

"We expect the Thai government will introduce new regulations for compact EV cars," Tsurumaki said.

The company has set up a company in Thailand named FOMM Asia to take care of research and development, manufacturing, marketing and sales. The company is still looking for business partners interested in manufacturing joint ventures.

"The FOMM compact EV car needs only 1,500 parts. We expect to start mass production in

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September 2017 and start to sell the EV car in Thailand in October 2017."

The company targets 5,000 sales in 2017, 16,000 in 2018, 30,000 in 2019 and 40,000 in 2020.

Pongchai Chaichirawiwat, senior executive vice president of Bangchak Petroleum, said the company would like to take part in providing the battery cloud for the electric cars. It might start from the company's more than 200 service stations in Bangkok, which is the priority market for the FOMM compact EVs.

Phanit Laosirirat, adviser to the Ministry of Science and Technology, said the electric vehicle was the new generation of automobile. It is forecast that by 2030, around 20 per cent of total vehicles on the road will be electrically powered, up from only 0.08 per cent now. There is therefore huge market potential.

He said the government had recognised the importance of science and technology as key drivers of economic and social development.

The National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Office and the Studies for Society Science and Technology Foundation have established a facilitation centre to promote the development of industrial R&D centres in Thailand.

This project should be an important mechanism for collaboration between the education/research sector and the private/industry sector for both of Thailand and other countries.

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