



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Toyota to Help Develop Vehicle to Explore Moon

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Japanese automaker Toyota says it will team up with the country's space agency to develop a vehicle to explore the moon.

The vehicle is called the Lunar Cruiser. The name comes from a popular Toyota vehicle called the Land Cruiser.

The company said it plans to launch the vehicle in the late 2020s. After that, Toyota said the vehicle could assist people living on the moon by 2040 and could possibly be sent to Mars as well.

Takao Sato heads the company's Lunar Cruiser project. He told The Associated Press the vehicle is based on the idea that people eat, work, sleep and communicate with others safely in cars. He hopes the Lunar Cruiser can serve the same purpose in space.

"We see space as an area for our once-in-a-century **transformation**, Sato said. "By going to space, we may be able to develop telecommunications and other technology that will prove valuable to human life."

Another company, Gitai Japan Inc., is partnering with Toyota to develop a robotic arm for the Lunar Cruiser. It will be designed to perform jobs such as carrying out inspections and **maintaining** the vehicle. The company said the arm will be built to work with different tools. These tools could be used to study the moon's surface more closely.

Interest in space has been growing in Japan in recent years.

Japanese space exploration company iSpace announced last April that it would transport an explorer belonging to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the moon in 2022. Japan's iSpace will provide the lander to carry the UAE's rover. The company plans to launch the lander on a Falcon 9 rocket built by American company SpaceX.

Japanese citizens followed the trip to space last year of billionaire Yusaku Maezawa. He spent 12 days aboard the International Space Station. Maezawa also plans in the future to orbit around the moon on a SpaceX's Starship spacecraft.

Toyota engineer Shinichiro Noda said he thinks the lunar project can extend the company's tradition of serving **customers** to a place beyond Earth.

He said Toyota currently has vehicles almost everywhere. "But this is about taking our cars to somewhere we have never been," Noda said.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Associated Press reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

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Words in This Story

transformation – *n.* a complete change

maintain – *v.* keep a thing in good condition

customer – *n.* someone who buys goods and services from a business