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Solar World: Honda enters solar market

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TEL AVIV, Israel, Dec. 7 (UPI) -- This week, Japanese automaker Honda followed DuPont, General Electric and others to become the latest company to make solar cells.

"To (create a society with less carbon dioxide production), Honda has already been working hard on hybrid and other environmentally friendly products," Yuji Hatano, of Honda's Corporate Communications Division, wrote to United Press International in an e-mail.

"As a manufacturer that generates CO₂, (it is important to us) to reduce CO₂ by creating (clean) energy," Hatano said.

"At the end of September 2006, Honda began construction of a plant to mass produce solar cells within the current site of Honda's Kumamoto factory, and the new facility will become operational in fall 2007 with an annual capacity of 27.5 megawatts," Hatano said.

"Prior to the startup of the new plant, Honda Soltec Co., Ltd. will begin sales in limited areas in March 2007, of ... solar cells produced by Honda Engineering. Once mass production begins at the new plant in Kumamoto in fall 2007, Honda Soltec will expand sales throughout Japan."

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Though the market is rife with companies dedicated to solar -- Lynch's index included DayStar Technologies, Inc., Evergreen Solar Inc., Powershares Wilderhill Clean Energy Fund, Sunpower Corp. and Suntech Power Holdings -- the technology was originally developed for space travel.

Some solar energy experts have told UPI that the entry of "regular" companies into the solar market proves there's money to be made there; others say the heavies, such as Sharp are the ones who have been pioneering solar for years.

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