

Mercedes-Benz races on Indian roads

Luxury car manufacturer Mercedes-Benz India Private Ltd is confident that sales will hit an all-time record in India this year. The company has already sold more than 50 percent of its 2007 sales during the first four months of 2008.

'Between January-April 2008 we have sold 1,330 units - both locally made and imported - against 2,491 units sold in all of 2007,' company managing director Wilfried Aulbur told IANS.

Bulk of the sales increase during the current year is attributed to the new C class model, of which the company sold 681 units against 779 units sold in all of 2007.

According to Aulbur, Mercedes-Benz has sold 221 S-Class models, 371 E-Class, 681 C-Class and 57 CBU in January-April 2008.

Last year, the company sold 411 S-Class models, 1,104 E-Class, 779 C-Class, 197 CBU, totalling 2,491 units, a growth of 18 percent over 2006.

'Our current year's target is to sell 3,000 cars,' he added.

Aulbur added that there was a rising trend of young entrepreneurs, software professionals and successful businessmen opting for Mercedes-Benz.

'We have come up with attractive finance schemes for them so that they can afford to drive home a Mercedes-Benz,' he said.

With demand for luxury cars set to pick up, Mercedes-Benz is setting up a new 5,000 units per annum plant in Chakan near Pune in Maharashtra. The capacity of its existing unit at Chikhali, near Pune is 4,000 units.

The new plant is expected to commence commercial production in 2009.

The company has discarded its old name DaimlerChrysler India and boosted its marketing strategies with the new name.

This was the first time the company registered four digit sales figures in a single quarter of a calendar year in Indian market.

In the January-March quarter, Mercedes Benz sold a total number of 1,094 units. The quarter also saw the company selling more than 100 S class vehicles.

On April 9, Mercedes-Benz rolled out the 20,000th locally produced car.

The size of the luxury car segment in India is put at 5,000 units a year. However, it is expected to grow with other players like BMW, Volvo and Audi joining the race.

Volvo Car India managing director Paul de Voijis said the company expected the luxury car market size to double by the end of this calendar year.

According to him, the company's target for the year is 500 units and it will increase its model line-up and the distribution network.

BMW, which expanded its [Chennai](#) plant's capacity by 1,300 units to 3,000 per year in 2007, is targeting sales of 2,000 units in 2008 against 1,387 units in the previous year.

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